

# FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

## Constructing Meaning by Using Metacognitive Reading Strategies in an EFL Classroom

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Masters' Program in Education with Emphasis on English Didactics

Bogotá D.C., Colombia

2018

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Note of acceptance

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### **Acknowledgments**

This research study has been a meaningful process which has contributed to my professional development, due to the creation of materials which was the key element which gave me the opportunity to develop my creativity through the implementation of the materials I designed. It became a rewarding experience taking into account that through the creation of materials, I found different ways to think upon how I could meet my students' needs.

Throughout this process, the guide of my thesis advisor Claudia Torres was essential to make this possible; she has supported me all along since we have been working hand in hand. Her dedication and her commitment have been fundamental to enrich this research study. Also, my family has been my aid to encourage me to achieve this goal and God who is my support and makes this desire come true.

### **Abstract**


This study was conducted with undergraduate students from a private university in Bogotá, Colombia. It is focused on describing how students used metacognitive reading strategies while reading not only the written text but also their context by activating their background knowledge to build their own viewpoint. This research study followed the qualitative approach and was an action research study. The data was gathered by means of three instruments: students' artifacts, one to one interview and field notes. The results reveal the impact that the use of metacognitive reading strategies had which fostered the students' reading process. In such a way, the participants identified their preferences while using some metacognitive reading strategies to summarize and reflect upon the texts and to set their own criteria through the implementation of the designed materials which allowed them to think about social issues, thus becoming more active readers.

*Keywords:* material design, worksheets, metacognitive reading strategies, reading comprehension, metacognition

### **Resumen**

Este estudio fue realizado con estudiantes de una universidad privada en Bogotá, Colombia. Este proyecto de investigación está enfocado en describir como los estudiantes usaron las estrategias metacognitivas de lectura mientras leían no solamente el texto escrito, sino también su contexto activando su conocimiento previo para construir su propio punto de vista. Este estudio siguió el enfoque cualitativo y fue un estudio de investigación-acción. Los datos fueron recogidos por medio de tres instrumentos: los artefactos de los estudiantes, los diarios de campo y las entrevistas. Los resultados revelan el impacto que tuvo el uso de estrategias metacognitivas de lectura para fortalecer el proceso de lectura de los estudiantes. De esta manera, los participantes identificaron sus preferencias mientras usaban algunas estrategias de lectura para resumir y reflexionar acerca de los textos y establecer su propio criterio a través de la implementación del diseño de material el cual le permitió a los estudiantes pensar en los problemas sociales, así, convirtiéndose en lectores más activos.

*Palabras claves:* diseño de material, guías de trabajo, estrategias metacognitivas de lectura, comprensión lectora, metacognición

	Resumen Analítico en Educación -RAE
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1. Información general	
<b>Tipo de documento</b>	Tesis de Grado
<b>Acceso del documento</b>	Universidad Externado de Colombia. Biblioteca central
<b>Título del documento</b>	Constructing Meaning by Using Metacognitive Reading Strategies in an EFL Classroom
<b>Autor(es)</b>	Angela Patricia Garzón Morales
<b>Director</b>	Claudia Torres Jaramillo
<b>Publicación</b>	Universidad Externado de Colombia, 2018
<b>Unidad Patrocinante</b>	Biblioteca. Universidad Externado de Colombia
<b>Palabras Claves</b>	Material design, worksheets, metacognitive reading strategies, reading comprehension and metacognition.

2. Descripción
<p>The current study explored the influence of metacognitive reading strategies in the development of students' reading comprehension process. This study was carried out at a private university, in Bogotá, Colombia with students of an English intermediate level, who attended English lessons four hours a week. According to the Cambridge Framework, the Intermediate level defines users as independent learners who “can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes &amp; ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans” (Trim, 2011, p.10). This study</p>

explored how metacognitive reading strategies became an important contribution to students' self-monitoring and students' awareness in their reading process to become critical thinkers. In this regard, the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006) states that it is mandatory for EFL students to acquire conversation and reading skills and to express themselves in a foreign language.

The purpose of this study was focused on how to improve the students' reading comprehension process by taking into account their needs and strengths evidenced through a questionnaire, survey, reading comprehension texts, and class observations. The results revealed the need to look for strategies to allow students to strengthen their reading comprehension level and their process as independent learners.

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#### 4. Contenidos

This document is divided into five chapters. In the first chapter, the reader will find the statement of the problem, the research question, and objectives. Besides, the chapter entails some related studies focusing on the impact of metacognitive reading strategies in reading students' comprehension process which are key to understand not only the pertinence of this research, but also the contribution that those strategies have in students' autonomy. The second chapter describes the theoretical constructs that support this study which are: language learning materials, reading comprehension, and metacognitive reading strategies. The third chapter deals with the methodological design which includes the research design as well as the pedagogical intervention, and the implementation of the didactic strategies. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of the data collected and the findings. Finally, the fifth chapter concerns the conclusions and the pedagogical implications of this study.

### 5. Metodología

This study was carried out at Manuela Beltrán University, a private Institution, located in Bogotá, Colombia. The participants were students from different careers and the English teacher who assumed two roles: a teacher researcher and a materials developer. This research focused on determining how the implementation of metacognitive reading strategies enhanced students' reading comprehension. For doing so, the current study is based on the qualitative approach which takes into account the following features. First, this approach collects different data sources through interpretative analysis to make the triangulation of them. Second, with the qualitative data collection the teacher researcher narrates the experiences based on the context and situational details related to the data collected. Third, through deliberation based on the data collected, the teacher researcher interprets it to make a critical reflection and to answer the researcher's question posed at the beginning of the process. Besides, action research is the type of study chosen for the current research. That is why, the qualitative approach, as well as action research, both helped me to construct knowledge and implement changes in my teaching to enhance my students' reading comprehension.

For the implementation of this study, I chose three instruments to collect data which were students' artifacts, one to one interview and field notes. All of these were fundamental not only to collect the necessary information but also to support the findings of this study.

My pedagogical intervention is based on the design of material based on metacognitive reading strategies based on the creation of five worksheets based on social issues. With this in mind, the following were the parts developed in each worksheet.

**Planning:** Predict what the reading will be about, taking into account the title of the text and the images (if showed). Also, the reader relates the previous knowledge and what he or she has experienced with the new information given.

**Monitoring:** Connect new knowledge to own experiences. So, the learning process will be more independent since the students use the metacognitive reading strategies while they read. Hence, they monitor their own processes.

**Problem solving:** Infer what the information is about, even when it is not explicit. In order to solve the problem understanding it and, trying to give sense to what is incomprehensible.

**Evaluating:** Summarize the information given in the text, checking students' understanding. To reinforce students' comprehension about the causes, effects and implications that social issues have.

**Remembering:** Reflect upon the effects that social issues have in society. To think about possible solutions to avoid and reduce these issues which affect people's well-being. Giving suggestions and showing their importance by reflecting about those problems and their possible solutions.

**Self-assessment:** Some questions are posed in regard to the three theoretical constructs that frame this research study.

These factors permeated my Materials Development framework since my research explored students' reading strategies by self-monitoring as well as teacher's assessment. In such a way, students became aware of how they used to do their reading process while reading texts in English and how this process changed because of using metacognitive reading strategies while reading. In addition to this, as a teacher researcher and developer, I realized that students liked to talk about social issues since they are familiar with them and in some cases they have experienced some of them. So, those texts were appealing for my students and became a good source to work with in class.

## 6. Conclusiones

Materials development is a meaningful area to explore, since through the creation of the worksheets, as a teacher researcher, I could respond to my students' needs and enhance their learning process. In such a way, innovation seems to be very important to highlight that "educational innovations are planned to bring about improvement in classroom practice with the ultimate aim of enhancing student achievement" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p.28). In this way, innovative materials can become appealing for students and can capture their attention.

As a teacher researcher I considered fundamental to reflect upon my pedagogical practice since "old habits die hard and teacher attitudes are not easily amenable to change" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p.37). In such a way, it is important to reflect upon how we teach and what we teach, taking into account that one of the main objectives of a teacher is to look for possible solutions to students' needs and bring innovation into the classroom.

Bearing in mind that innovation was one of the pillars of this current study and based on my students' perceptions, they pointed out that the use of the worksheets was a meaningful tool that enhanced their learning since the different activities were appealing and familiar to them. In such a way, students were engaged with the activities since one of the main goals of a teacher researcher is "to make the innovation more compatible to the needs of the teachers and to the realities of the classroom context" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p. 39).

While students recognized the importance of using metacognitive reading strategies and since they self-monitored their learning process, they became aware of how they read while reflecting upon social issues. In such a way, by using the worksheets the students were able to put into practice these strategies thus improving their reading comprehension. For instance, students considered the metacognitive reading strategies as a useful tool to apply in their reading since they could focus on the main ideas more easily while reading the text. In addition, when students used glosses, they could create a deeper understanding of the texts. However, in one of the texts, some students admitted that it was challenging for them to use glosses, especially when the texts were long since it took them more time to do the tasks.

In a similar way, students found predicting as a significant reading strategy, taking into account that they had the opportunity to approach the text before reading it, which allowed them to employ their prior knowledge, bearing in mind clues such as pictures, titles and images, among other aspects. In the same way, another reading strategy they employed was using their background knowledge. This was an important strategy which motivated students to get closer to the text. In a similar way, activating their background knowledge was fundamental to introduce the topic since students were able to relate their own experiences with the new input given in the text by making comparisons and establishing relations to enrich and gain knowledge.

Also, students liked to summarize the information given from the text by making mind maps. They stated that it was a very useful and didactic tool to identify the most important information, making connections and summarizing the information shown in the text which made it more comprehensible. It also allowed them to keep track of their reading process, by prioritizing the most relevant information by re-writing it using key-words or sentences.

Besides, students were proposing some possible solutions to overcome the social issues mentioned in the worksheets. It was not easy for them to think about those alternatives, since most

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of them have lived or faced these problems which continue to affect society. However, they came up with some possible suggestions based on self-questioning and reflection. In that order of ideas, students activated their learning by putting it in context and they were engaged in looking for possible solutions to solve the problems.

While implementing the worksheets, students found interesting to read a text and use the reading strategies. They stated that they could remember the information easier by doing so. In such a way, students mentioned that before this implementation, when they read texts in English, they just read them once and they focused their attention on developing the reading tasks because that was what they were asked to do. Thus, they recognized that they were not aware of how they were monitoring their reading comprehension or how they were using the reading strategies. Bearing this in mind, the students took advantage of using those reading strategies and this was a rewarding experience for them since these allowed them to self-monitor their reading process and also to construct reading awareness. The latter played a worthy role since developing reading awareness allowed students to monitor their own learning process by approaching reading in a more critical way, thus enhancing their reading skills through self-assessment.

Considering that this group of students did not like reading in English very much because they found it difficult, throughout this study, they became familiarized with some reading strategies and these helped them to improve their reading comprehension by self-monitoring their learning process.

In sum, reading a text with a critical perspective is an important process to achieve because a reader has the possibility to relate his or her background knowledge with the new information found in a text, considering that a critical reader can analyse and give an opinion or suggestion about a topic. In this order of ideas, the more a reader gets involved with a reading, the better he/she will understand the topic. In such a way, a reader who dares to pose questions about a text and who confronts the stance presented by the author, becomes a critical reader who can challenge what the writer has to say.

<b>Elaborado Por:</b>	Angela Patricia Garzón Morales
<b>Revisado Por:</b>	

<b>Fecha de elaboración del</b>	03	04	2018
<b>Resumen:</b>			

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### **Introduction**

The current study explored the influence of metacognitive reading strategies in the development of students' reading comprehension process. This study was carried out at a private university, in Bogotá, Colombia with students of an English intermediate level, who attended English lessons four hours a week. According to the Cambridge Framework, the Intermediate level defines users as independent learners who "can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans" (Trim, 2011, p.10). This study explored how metacognitive reading strategies became an important contribution to students' self-monitoring and students' awareness in their reading process to become critical thinkers. In this regard, the Ministry of Education (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 2006) states that it is mandatory for EFL students to acquire conversation and reading skills and to express themselves in a foreign language.

The purpose of this study was focused on how to improve the students' reading comprehension process by taking into account their needs and strengths evidenced through a questionnaire, survey, reading comprehension texts, and class observations. The results revealed the need to look for strategies to allow students to strengthen their reading comprehension level and their process as independent learners.

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related studies focusing on the impact of metacognitive reading strategies in reading students' comprehension process which are key to understand not only the pertinence of this research, but also the contribution that those strategies have in students' autonomy. The second chapter describes the theoretical constructs that support this study which are: language learning materials, reading comprehension, and metacognitive reading strategies. The third chapter deals with the methodological design which includes the research design as well as the pedagogical intervention, and the implementation of the didactic strategies. The fourth chapter focuses on the analysis of the data collected and the findings. Finally, the fifth chapter concerns the conclusions and the pedagogical implications of this study.

## **Chapter I**

### **Research Problem**

#### **Statement of the Problem**

It is well known that reading is a worthy activity to gain knowledge and make sense of the texts, not only to comprehend an idea but also to interpret it. Thus, a reader should construct meaning when reading by taking into account the reader's knowledge and the knowledge of the world. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish the relation between the reader and the text and see how interaction works between them. That is why my concern was related to finding out different strategies to strengthen students' reading comprehension and fostering the use of metacognitive reading strategies to achieve so.

The study was conducted with Intermediate students (level 4) at Manuela Beltrán University, a private institution located in Bogotá, Colombia. This institution offers English as a core subject and students must take seven levels: Initial English, Basic 1 and 2, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, and Advanced. As an English teacher at this institution, I was interested in finding out how students could improve their reading comprehension level.

Considering the above, I decided to focus on social issues since students enjoyed reading about this topic which is related to the preferences they had mentioned in an opinion survey I applied. On the other hand, according to the observations made in class, I identified that students struggled with reading because they faced difficulties in this type of activity, when having to answer critical comprehension questions. This situation worried me since they were just reading

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in a literal way. Also, it was relevant to establish what strategies students were using in their reading process and how they monitored their reading comprehension.

Moreover, based on the questionnaire applied, some of the students answered that they did not need a plan to read while others said that it was important to make predictions about the text, based on the title or subtitles. On the other hand, for some students, it was not important to make inferences from the text or to work out diagrams/mind maps to make sense of the reading. As a matter of fact, students' responses evidenced the difficulty to interpret a text. Therefore, it was crucial to get an upturn and develop students' reading skills by using metacognitive reading strategies.

With this in mind, the educational system should be take into account “the importance of including students' voices in order to update teaching materials in terms of the way learners would like to learn and what they need to learn in today's increasingly globalized world” (Núñez & Téllez, 2009, p. 172). In such a way, it is fundamental to think upon students' requirements and interests and look for different and innovative strategies which tackle students' needs and contribute to enhance their learning. Therefore, identifying and meeting students' needs will most probably narrow the gap between learners' needs and teaching materials that address such needs and, so, foster both their level of involvement in the classroom and their language performance. Based on the above, I posed the following research question that guided my study.

### **Research Question**

How do the design and implementation of materials focused on metacognitive reading strategies enhance reading comprehension among university students in an EFL classroom?

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### Research Objectives

**General objective:** To explore the impact of metacognitive reading strategies on the development of university students' reading comprehension by creating materials in an EFL classroom.

**Specific objectives:** (a) To analyze how the use of materials focused on metacognitive reading strategies impact reading comprehension among university students; (b) To establish the influence that metacognitive reading strategies have on the development of students' reading comprehension.

### Related Studies

Some studies related to the constructs of this research which are learning materials, metacognitive reading strategies and reading comprehension are described below.

Concerning language learning materials, a qualitative action research study was carried out by Lopera (2015) at Universidad de Antioquia, in Medellin, Colombia with undergraduate students and four in-service English teachers. In this study, while designing the manual, teachers focused on analysing if the methodology implemented was pertinent along the process. For doing so, one of the instruments used was observing how by designing their own reading materials, the participants made self-corrections, proof-reading and sharing the material with peers. It was focused on language learning materials which played an essential role to create contextualized teaching and learning environments. The aim of this study was focused on material design to create a manual, based on cultural information, by using reading with visual aids, as well as readings that involved pre, while, and post-reading activities.

As a result, a sample of a reading strategy was given to illustrate how teachers worked and designed the manual. The conclusions suggested that the process of designing a manual

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helped teachers to understand their beliefs and practices when teaching reading in a foreign language. Also, the handmade manual created by the teacher was a good tool for improving reading comprehension material. In that creation, assessment was an important part during the process.

To sum up, the findings revealed that teacher made materials was a challenging issue because the teacher must plan, explore, propose, and reflect upon the materials' creation and students' learning processes. Hence, this study contributes to mine because I was a teacher researcher and a materials developer. In that way, one of my most important purposes was to create attractive and contextualized materials focused on students' needs.

Likewise, Meniado (2016) carried out a qualitative action research study focused on the use of metacognitive reading strategies at the Yanbu Industrial College, with 43 participants from the Beginners level (A2) according to the CEFR Framework. The instruments used were a survey, a questionnaire, a standardized test of English Proficiency (STEP) used to test the students' English proficiency level, as well as the Mock Test. During the implementation of the study, the researcher used English academic texts, considering students' interests. In such a way, problem solving strategies were the most frequently used, since students showed interest in using them by reading humor or comic books. However, when students did the tests, they realized that they got a low score in regard to the reading comprehension performance. Nevertheless, there was an impact on students' reading motivation. Based on the findings of the research, readers planned, monitored, and evaluated their reading performance when reading material that contained humor and enjoyment.

In relation to metacognitive reading strategies, Khonamri and Kojidi (2011) carried out a quantitative-qualitative study based on descriptive statistical procedure. The instruments used

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were: surveys, checklists, open ended items, the question-answer technique, graphic organizers, reflections made in the reading worksheets and class discussions. This study was carried out at Industrial Univeristy of Noshirvani in Babol, Iran. The purpose of the study was to find out if there was any relationship between the degree of metacognitive awareness of reading strategies and comprehension by monitoring EFL readers. One hundred and fifteen students participated in this study. All of them were among 19- 20 years old. Participants belonged to two different sociocultural contexts. The first group included Iranias who had studied English in a monolingual society while the second group consisted of Indians who had lived in a multilingual country. The researcher implemented questionnaires which included global reading strategies, problem solving strategies, and support reading strategies. The study demonstrated that reading is an interactive process in which reading comprehension plays an important role to achieve an understanding of the world and to make sense of the different texts. Eventhough this study was done within a quantitative-qualitative approach that differs from mine, it is related because it demonstrated that reading involves a reciprocal process in which the students read the world and, therefore, interpret it and give their point of view.

Similarly, Echeverri and McNulty (2010) carried out a qualitative study at Unidad Educativa San Marcos, in Colombia, with eight graders by means of a directed reading-thinking approach under a descriptive statistical procedure. The instruments used were a journal and a feedback card. The aim was to enhance reading comprehension by using reading strategies. The focus of this study was on how students made connections between their own knowledge and experiences and the new information that was being taught. In that order, previous knowledge is considered as a meaningful source to construct new knowledge.

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That is why, the most common reading strategies used were: activating background knowledge, doing predictions and graphic organizers, answering questions and interacting with classmates in an EFL classroom. The researcher followed a pre-reading, during, and after reading monitoring. In such a way, students' progress was checked by using three different graphic designers. While reading the text, the teacher asked questions through a question-answer technique. At the end of the sessions, students claimed that the readings were interesting. In the same way, they made predictions about the text, a useful strategy to identify their previous knowledge about the topic. To sum up, the use of graphic organizers was interesting and useful, as well as answering questions, because the participants monitored their process, clarifying doubts and understanding the text in a better way. In such a way, my study is similar to this one, due to the fact that students implemented metacognitive reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension.

Moreover, Manrique (2015) carried out a qualitative action research at Universidad Francisco José de Caldas with undergraduate students. The instruments used were students' artifacts and field notes. It aimed at determining how the use of worksheets focused on building vocabulary were meaningful to improve the reading comprehension process, by using different texts, in which students felt interested in reading them based on their context and preference. By doing so, students were learning more vocabulary and becoming more successful readers when acquiring words, putting them in context and answering comprehension questions, in which students demonstrated that their reading performance improved by having a better understanding of the text and feeling more motivated to read them. This study contributes to mine because it was focused on fostering reading comprehension through the use of worksheets based on

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vocabulary, which gives new input and also allows readers to answer comprehension questions more easily.

Likewise, Umbarila (2010) carried out a qualitative action research at I.E.D Colegio Colombia in Bogotá, with ninth graders. This study used the grounded approach with a critical perspective to analyze the data gathered. The instruments used were students's artifacts and video recordings. The main objective of this study was to use critical pedagogy practices to enhance students' reading as well as the other language skills. In this way, the study was successful because it fostered reflection towards social, political, and cultural issues based on authentic historical facts related to them and besides, it also acknowledged the students' cultural background. Thus, students were empowered by building their own voice which was evidenced throughout the video recordings and artifacts. Thus, one of the main purposes was to give importance to students' voices not only to enrich their role as citizens but also to evidence their commitment towards social issues. In such a way, the analysis of the data highlighted the importance of giving students a voice to allow them to assume as responsible and helpful citizens. This study is related to mine because it emphasizes on the importance of reflecting upon social issues to foster students' own voice, by means of Critical Pedagogy which was the approach I used in my research.

### **Setting**

This research study took place at Manuela Beltrán University. This is a private university which has two branches, one in Bogotá, Colombia, and the other one in Cajicá, a nearby village. The mission of the university is to educate innovative, successful, and good citizens. Besides, its vision is to provide a place to learn cooperatively and to strengthen students' cognitive and social development.



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In sum, for Manuela Beltrán University it is important to generate a true change in the teaching-learning processes. This entails looking for strategies which allow students to develop their skills and to educate an independent learner who researches and establishes a dialog with others by thinking in a critical way.

### **Rationale**

From my experience as a teacher and teacher researcher, I consider meaningful to reflect upon the reading process. Every day, as human beings, we read different texts and create other ones, developing our criterion. Therefore, it is important to identify what strategies students use to read by assisting them in exploring metacognitive reading strategies. Under these circumstances, this research inquired about how to enhance their reading comprehension, through designed material focused on social issues, which is a controversial topic nowadays, in which students had to state their own voice on the matter. From my teaching experience, I have realized how relevant it is to encourage students to keep a dialogical relation with a text. Since I started working, I have been interested in contributing to the local community by helping learners become critical thinkers through using metacognitive reading strategies.

In this regard, metacognition nowadays is an important area in education, not only because students become aware of their own learning processes but also because they can also become more independent learners. In this sense, this study explored students' reading processes, emphasizing on the importance of appreciating reading as a social practice in which everybody took part in it. Based on Freire's criterion (1987), reading is focused on reflecting upon social issues through critical awareness, analysis, and interaction. This is why I decided to focus on social issues for my students to reflect upon. By reading, students became more active

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learners who created their own criterion. Therefore, the contribution of this research relied on the fact that students not only reflected upon this topic but also enhanced their reading process.

To implement new strategies, it was necessary to create new material even though the university already had some material. However, it was not focused on developing reading strategies as Blachowicz and Ogle state (2008) “a classroom full of materials is essential for growing good readers (...) materials should be chosen for motivational as well as instructional value” (p. 47) In these order of ideas, I consider that materials are essential to motivate students. Thus, it was necessary to look for the most interesting and meaningful materials to engage students in participating actively in the learning process.

Thus, this study contributes to the the research line on Materials Development and Didactics of the Masters’ emphasis because it shows the importance of identifying each student’s needs related to his or her reading comprehension process; looking for the suitable reading strategies that allow students to reflect upon their own reading process; and searching for new ways to enhance reading comprehension through the creation of materials. Through the design of materials, I was able as a teacher researcher to identify the most suitable metacognitive reading strategies that fit each reader’s process and for learners to recognize that beyond reading a written text, there is a meaningful process that needs to be carried out.

Besides, this study enriches the Master’s research line since reading is a fundamental skill to develop that allows students, not only to gain knowledge but also to assume a more critical stance towards issues of inclusion, social justice and equity.

## Chapter II

### Literature Review

This chapter addresses the constructs of this study. On the one hand, *language learning materials* within the concept of Materials Development with the intention of finding the most significant and useful materials to work with language learners. On the other hand, *reading comprehension* as a fundamental skill to foster, framed within the concept of reading. And lastly, *metacognitive reading strategies*, to monitor the students' learning processes to strengthen reading. These are explained below.

#### Materials Development

Materials Development is an important field of study and teachers nowadays carry out research in this area. That is why, materials development is a meaningful area to explore by proposing and implementing materials in the classroom. Bearing in mind that,

from the Materials Development and Didactics line, it is expected that the participants empower themselves with new ways of appreciating the teaching of languages and exercise a change in their belief system as well as the belief system of their students, proposing critical alternatives in response to what society demands of them (Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos, 2013, p.8).

Considering the above, the current study enhances the use of materials for students to gain knowledge as well as to foster their reading comprehension and become more critical readers. To do so, materials should be contextualized, taking into account the population, the sociocultural context, students' needs and strengths so as to contribute with the local community in which the study takes place. In this sense, Núñez and Téllez's (2009) argue that: "materials development

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contributes directly to teachers' professional growth insofar as it better their knowledge, skills and creativity, raises their consciousness as regards teaching and learning procedures, and allows them to act as agents of permanent change" (p. 184). In this regard, there are different aspects which are important to take into consideration when implementing materials. First, materials have to be relevant for students, to encourage them to get involved in the activity. Second, materials should be based on real contexts; an important feature which recognizes the pertinence of contextualized materials that consider local needs. Third, it is important to think about interesting and motivating activities acknowledging that teacher-made materials entail a challenging process, since these imply for teachers to design them to engage students (Mishan & Chambers, 2010).

Likewise, Tomlinson (2003) claims that materials are relevant for learners while having close contact with them through experience. In this aspect, they will provide a meaningful experience, which improves language acquisition, by means of reflecting and monitoring the process while using the materials. Furthermore, materials should assist learners to develop confidence. In this way, students can develop their autonomy and monitor their own learning process as well as become independent learners.

Furthermore, materials should assist learners to develop confidence. In this way, students can develop their autonomy and monitor their own process as well. Thus, it is important to foster students' autonomy, bearing in mind that "each learner is different from all the others in a class, in terms of his or her personality, motivation, attitude, aptitude, prior experience, interests, needs, wants and preferred learning style" (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 18). That is why, while creating materials, one of the most important objectives is to take into account the characteristics of your participants and their needs as well as the teacher researcher's inquiry. The aforementioned ideas

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converge and become crucial when designing and implementing materials. In the same line of thought,

The benefits for teachers are the teachers' empowerment, increase of students' motivation, the need to listen to students' voices to consider their needs, the requirement of contextualizing teaching materials, the awareness teachers can benefit from in terms of having a holistic view of education, and both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills they acquire by developing materials (Ramos & Aguirre, 2014, p. 139).

In that sense, while knowing and considering students' needs, the students' learning process can be enriched by designing and developing materials that respond to students' interests. Acknowledging this, the current study focused on the implementation of worksheets to enhance students' reading comprehension through the creation of contextualized learning materials that motivated students to do so in the EFL classroom.

**Language learning materials.** As mentioned above, Materials Development is an important field of study. In light of this, Mishan & Chambers (2011) argue that "The importance for language learning activities is to be meaningful, purposeful and contextualised" (p. 5). In this regard, the current study focused on creating innovative materials for achieving students' self-investment. In this regard, language learning materials are referred to "anything which is used by teachers or learners to facilitate the learning of a language (..) in other words, they can be anything which is deliberately used to increase the learners' knowledge and/ or experience of the language" (Tomlinson, 2011, p. 2)

That is why, teachers' creativity and innovation are important aspects to consider when designing materials, emphasizing that "materials should achieve impact" (Mishan & Chambers, 2010, p.4). Bearing this in mind, language learning materials are key elements within the field of

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Materials Development. Thus, three of the most important features of these types of materials are: first, to help students become independent learners; second, to gain knowledge, and third, to assume a critical standpoint about the materials. In that order, students could become effective communicators and critical readers, by monitoring their own learning process during the three stages of a lesson: before, during and after reading by means of self-assessment.

Moreover, “learners think, say and learn more if they are given an experience or text to respond to than if they are just asked for their views, opinions and interests” (Tomlinson, 2014, p. 18) With this in mind, to activate students’ background knowledge becomes a meaningful strategy for students to approach the text by considering their prior knowledge as a key element to bring alive their experiences which can improve language acquisition.

**Typology.** Considering the explanation provided above, it is important to highlight that for this study I used *worksheets* as the type of language learning materials. I designed these worksheets to enhance students’ reading comprehension and they had a mixture of both authentic and non-authentic texts. In this regard, Wallace (2001) defines authentic texts as “real-life texts, not written for pedagogic processes” (p. 145). In this study, I chose authentic texts that dealt with real social issues and they did not have an educational purpose in mind. On the other hand, Mills (2003) states that “non-authentic materials are those materials that are specially designed for learning purposes and the language used in them is artificial with well-formed sentence all the time which is useful for teaching grammar” (p.45). Thus, I also used some non-authentic materials and I adapted them to create the *worksheets* for this study.

Under these circumstances, as materials developer, I took in mind that “the adaptation process is therefore, the very process that can make materials relevant and thus potentially effective for learning development” (Tomlinson, 2003, p. 77). This implies to transform non-

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authentic and authentic materials to create materials that are appealing for students which contribute to gaining more knowledge and which make students feel interested by fostering interaction with the materials.

**Teachers' reflection when creating materials.** In terms of the role played by reflection in the design of materials, Nuñez and Tellez state (2015) that “reflection also serves the purpose of creating a reflective learning environment that engages teachers in appropriate and relevant activities, and motivates them to ponder their pedagogical and research practices” (p. 67). That is why, as a teacher researcher, I consider reflection as an essential component when gathering information and proposing alternatives to find relevant and innovative materials that enhance students' participation. In such a way, “reflectivity is a dialogue of thinking and doing through which I become more skilful” Giovannelli (as cited in Núñez and Téllez, 2015, p. 58). That process allows not only to reflect upon a concern but also to find out how a user can change for the better; a practice which fosters self-evaluation and reading awareness.

In this sense, Núñez & Téllez (2009) affirmed: “The onset of teachers' reflection is the individual assessment of the EFL classroom, which enables them to make decisions when they create or adapt materials that fulfil particular needs and learning setting” (p. 172). This entails reflecting about student's needs and their cultural background. Furthermore, Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos (2013) argue that “materials are socio-cultural resources that facilitate not only linguistic interaction but also cultural exchanges between the various human groups. Moreover, they are forms of social mediation that allow the flow of knowledge” (p. 10). In the same line of thought, I consider that the social and cultural aspects are key factors to consider when creating materials so as to make them appropriate and related to the context and the population selected. Hence, reflection fosters teachers' self-evaluation and awareness.

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In this regard, “Reflecting on teachers’ personal and professional growth through a materials development seminar raises teachers’ awareness of personal and professional growth by enhancing their discipline knowledge, pedagogical practices, and research projects as well as fostering self-confidence, creativity, and self-esteem” (Núñez & Tellez, 2015, p. 45). Thus, as teacher researcher I consider that it is meaningful to carry out a study which centers on a constant process of reflection. In this regard, the main idea of my research was to focus on the use of metacognitive reading strategies to enhance learner’s reading comprehension; a process that requires self-monitoring and to think constantly about the process.

With this in mind Loughran (2002) states that “reflective practice is a powerful way of informing practice as it makes the tacit explicit, meaningful, and useful” (p. 38). So, reflective practice is an individual process which empowers a person and guides her or him to find the best way out. Along this line, teacher researchers also need to assume their teaching practice “with passion and with purpose” (Loughran & Russell, 1997, p. xiii), since being a teacher researcher is a challenging endeavor. In light of this, Cárdenas, González, & Álvarez (2010) argue that “the development of education is focused on looking for pedagogical options to transform and build the knowledge and their pedagogical duty based on the reflection about the praxis” (p. 54). Considering the above, education entails to look at ones’ own praxis which is a key aspect to focus on. In this sense, Núñez and Téllez (2015) argue that

reflection, awareness of and MD rationale, affect, motivation, teachers' beliefs, creativity, and commitment are the components that interplay in MD. The outcome of this process comprises materials like a book, a module, a didactic unit, a workshop, a worksheet, a lesson, or a learning task. This typology responds to local needs of teaching settings” (, p. 57).



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So through reflection, as teacher researcher, it is was possible to identify my students' needs and interests and develop materials which encouraged them to participate more actively by self-assessing their own learning process.

### **Reading**

It is well-known that reading is a fundamental process to develop in education since human beings are reading not only words but also interpreting contexts related to different situations. Reading as a worthy process, “does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 29). Considering the above, there is a concern among educators to identify which strategies students should use when they read since reading a text consists of reading between the lines and inferring the whole meaning, considering the context as well as the reader. These are key aspects to understand this complex process. In addition, reading is a meaningful practice to understand the world since “the act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xiii).

From childhood, the human being starts to learn and reads the world, getting closer to people, places and feelings. In such a way, the first thing a person learns is not to read words but to read the world, understanding the context, how people behave, what costumes a group has, how relationships work, and so on. This is a means to comprehend what characterizes a society.

Considering the above, one of the inquiries that comes up is what is the relationship among the reader, the context, and the text developer. As teacher researcher, I have become aware of two roles which students usually assume. On the one hand, a non-participating individual, who reads the text, while comprehending it literally and mechanically; on the other

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hand, an active reader, who scrutinizes the text, analyzes it, and builds an opinion about it. Under these circumstances, it is not enough for a reader to comprehend what a text says; what a reader needs is to experience and interpret what the text is saying in between the lines, since “the more we know about what we are reading, the easier it will be to read” (Goodman & Wilde, 1996, p. 106). When a reader approaches a text, analyses it, and gives meaning to it, she or he is taking an active part in doing so.

Besides, I agree with Freire and Macedo (1987) when they state that “reading is a political act, an act of knowledge and therefore a creative act” (p. 34), since the main purpose of a reader is to understand rather than to read in a mechanical manner. If reading is a political act, the reader should assume a personal view of the text; this is why, it is important to enhance students’ reading processes.

In this line of thought, Freire and Macedo (1987) claim that a “student is the subject of the process of learning to read and write as an act of knowing and of creating” (p. 34). Thus, one of the challenges that teachers face is to help readers interpret the written words and come up with their own reflections, creating an image of what they read, and making connections between the new input received and the information already stored in their minds. Due to this, “readers construct their own meaning as they read” (Goodman & Wilde, 1996, p.48) which is one of the most noteworthy developments a reader does when he or she approaches a text to gain knowledge.

**Reading comprehension.** An active reader is someone who scrutinizes a text, bearing in mind his/her previous knowledge, to contrast it with the new information presented. When the writer is presenting ideas, the reader ought to be posing questions, deducing what the author means, and experiencing what the written text says, to create his/her own understanding and

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interpretation of the text. In this regard, Goodman & Wilde (1996 ) point out that “reading is not passive; on the contrary, the reader is active in creating meaning as she or he reaches out to understand the comprehension results from this interaction through a text” (p. 67). This way of approaching a written text entails taking into account the sociocultural events which occurred when the text was written, as Vygotsky (1983) states:

culture creates special forms of behavior, changes the functioning of mind, constructs new stories in the developing system of human behavior. In the course of historical development, social humans change the ways and means of their behavior, transform their natural premises and functions, elaborate and create new, specifically cultural forms of behavior (as cited in Daniels, 2005, p. 30)

Therefore, culture includes society’s costumes, rules, and relationships, among others. However, when a person is reading a text, it is important to go back to the period of time when the text was written, because society changes constantly and as readers it is crucial to read the situations and comprehend them in the moment when they were happening. As mentioned above, the cultural context is an important variable to enhance active reading and to achieve a better comprehension level. In this sense, Goodman and Wilde (1996) argue that “when readers focus on development of meaning through the context of written language, comprehension occurs” (p. 68). Similar to Goodman’s and Wilde’s experiential reading, comprehension is a process in which the reader constructs an image of the reading related to the text. From my point of view, I think that if a reader experiences the text meaningfully, the reader gains knowledge and establishes a relation with it, which is even more worthy for the reader to give meaning to the text.

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Thus, the act of giving sense to a text is an interactive process between the text and the reader. Hence, reading comprehension according to Snow (2002) is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing through interaction and involvement with written language” (p. 12). Thus, this is achieved through interaction between the reader and the text. To do so, it is important that while approaching the text, the reader asks questions, and makes comments about some ideas, checking his/her understanding.

Likewise, and according to Goodman and Wilde (1996), there are three important aspects to consider that help students become better readers. First, “keep the students’ focus on meaning” which requires both comprehending and interpreting the text’s meaning; second, having a close approximation to the text by being ‘confident risk takers as they read’. Through this process, students pose questions regularly, contrast the information of the text with their own critical point of view, to give meaning to it. And third “keep students reading” which is a key aspect since a reader should get involved with the text, feeling curious about it and making predictions.

**Reading as an interactive process.** Through the praxis of reading a text or reading the world, the reader can reflect upon the text. In this sense, Freire and Macedo (1987) claim that “the more I experienced myself, the more perceptual capacity increases” (p.30). In this regard, Goodman and Wilde (1996) state that “meaning is constructed by the reader in transacting with the text” (p. 85) which entails a process that is carried out through the reader’s perception; a cycle where the reader goes back and forth through the text by elaborating hypothesis to answer questions. Moreover, Goodman and Wilde (1996) affirm that “the meaning is in the writer and the reader” (p. 85) This idea refers to the pragmatic level where the reader should establish a parallel interpretation with the text. The interpretation of the text by a reader reflects how a reader approaches the text and how he or she analyzes it. The above taking into account that one

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of the principal purposes of reading is to keep a dialogical communication, among the reader, the context and the text, to make sense of it. Thus, the reader thinks deliberately to build a critical opinion about it.

In sum and considering what has been stated so far, McNamara (2007) argues that “comprehension refers to the ability to go beyond the words to understand the ideas and the relationships between ideas conveyed in a text” (p. xi). Hence, reading a text implies going beyond reading the words. To do so, a reader needs to interpret and analyze it, finding out what enquiries come up by contrasting previous knowledge with the new one, understanding other points of view and creating one’s own voice which is one way for reader’s to approach a text.

**Reading strategies.** These fosters students’ reading comprehension. In this regard, a “Reading strategy is defined as a selective parameter specification in the system of eye movement control in reading that is necessary to achieve specified a reading goal (Wotschack, 2009, p. 16). With this mind, the reader is the one who sets up his or her goals as well as establishes how she or he can achieve them. For doing so, it is important to recognize each students’ interests, taking into account that “individuals differ widely in their reading abilities” (Wotschack, 2009, p. 21)

Taking into account the information stated above, it is important to recognize that reading strategies allow students to engage in reading activities by self-monitoring which can improve their reading comprehension process. According to Robb (1992), there are some efficient strategies which improve the readers’ performance. In such a way, those reading strategies help learners enhance their reading comprehension. Likewise, Kujawa & Huske (1995) state that, “prior knowledge is a combination of students’ established attitudes, experience and knowledge” (as cited in Brummer & Macceca, 2008, p. 65). Thus, the reader’s role seems to be as important

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as the writer's one, thus establishing a close relationship among both of them. That is why activating students' previous knowledge is essential in a reading process as affirmed by Macceca (2007), "the breadth and depth of the prior knowledge that students bring to the classroom is strongly connected to their achievement in reading" (p. 66). Hence, it is very important to bring to class topics that allow students to relate their own experiences with the new input received which helps them to construct meaning by giving sense to the text.

Another reading strategy that can be used is visualization. According to Robb (1992), the reader "uses imagery to understand and enjoy reading" (p. 15). In such a way, through images students can relate their background knowledge with the text to construct meaning and to start giving their opinions about a text. Thus, this is a good strategy to encourage students to talk about what they see and how they interpret the images. In a similar way, it is important to mention that making predictions is another good strategy to use since a reader can predict information about a text before reading it. In such a way, while reading, the reader can confirm if the predictions made were right or wrong helping him/her get closer to the text. In a similar way, another useful strategy is rereading the text, focusing on some clues as needed, considering that rereading a text, "clears up confusing parts" (Robb, 1992, p. 15). In such a way, this strategy entails reflection while reading, by interacting with the text. Moreover, questioning is another useful reading strategy. This strategy allows the reader to self-monitor his/her own reading process, by getting closer to the text and establishing a close relation with it. Also, taking notes is another meaningful strategy and the reader can use glosses when doing so. Besides, the reader can take advantage of paraphrasing and choosing the most relevant information by summarizing it.

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Bearing in mind the above, in the reading process there are three relevant stages to consider. The first one is “knowing students’ background knowledge on a topic, makes it easier to build on and activate that knowledge during reading (Macceca, 2007, p. 9) Thus, the reader reflects upon the text, by putting into practice what she or he knows or has experienced. The second one is “while students are learning, they are in process of connecting the new information they are learning to their existing schemata” (Macceca, 2007, p.11). So, the reader established a connection with the text, assuming a critical position towards it, since the more the reader approaches a text, the more s/he gains knowledge by interacting with it.

And the third, after reading “students build connections among the bits of information about which they have heard, enabling them to deepen their understanding and reflect on what they have learned” (Macceca, 2007, p. 12) In such a way, students not only summarize the text but also set their own criterion about it, by assuming a more critical stance.

### **Metacognitive Strategies**

Nowadays, metacognition is an important research topic, due to its contribution to education. It allows readers to use metacognitive strategies to make sense of a text. This implies for “students to be aware of their learning, to evaluate their learning needs, to generate strategies to meet their needs and to implement those strategies” (Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser, 2009, p.1). Hence, metacognitive strategies become not only a relevant topic for helping students overcome their needs, but also a way to develop students’ awareness about their reading processes. That is why, as a teacher researcher, I consider that metacognitive strategies are worthwhile to implement in class since they allow students to reflect on their level of autonomy, awareness, and understanding of their reading process.

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**Metacognitive reading strategies.** While reading, it is important to use metacognitive reading strategies since these can help enhance reading comprehension. In such a way, The New South Wales Department of Education and Training (2010) “defines metacognitive reading strategies as planned, intentional, goal-directed, and future-oriented mental activities and processes that help a reader think about and check how he progresses in fulfilling a cognitive task” (as cited in Meniado, 2016, p. 119) In such a way, the reader self-monitors his or her own reading process as well as self-evaluates his or her reading performance. In light of this, Iwai (2011) “summarizes the process of metacognition in three steps: 1) Planning; 2) Monitoring; and 3) Evaluation” (as cited in as cited in Meniado, 2016, p. 119). Those phases are important to foster students’ reading comprehension as explained below.

***Planning before reading.*** Each reader should know how he or she can plan his or her activities by monitoring one’s progress and finding another way to learn; this entails becoming the main artist of his/her own research. Hence, Manning (1991) argues that “metacognitive experiences have been shown to be instrumental in fostering benefits, for students’ memory, comprehension, problem solving, and self-control abilities” (p. 125). By virtue of this, each student should know what weaknesses and strengths are involved in his or her reading process by practicing self-assessment which is constructed throughout practice. That is why “the objective of education today is strengthening learning to learn” (Núñez & Téllez, 2003, p. 27), bearing in mind that independent learners not only improve their own processes, but also contribute to others’ work, which is even better and rewarding.

Thus, *planning* involves organization that allows students to clarify their own processes, objectives, and strategies. Data is a standpoint and a reference for background knowledge of what the reader thinks the text will be about which entails making predictions.



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***Sel-regulation when reading.*** When we are autonomous “as agents of our own thinking, we construct our understanding of ourselves and the world, we control our thoughts and behaviors, and we monitor the consequences of them” (Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser, 2009, p.14) For this reason, each student should be aware of his or her own process and monitor himself or herself regularly during the ongoing process to achieve better understanding by using metacognitive reading strategies.

Considering the above, when students monitor their reading process, they need to start figuring out what metacognitive reading strategies are the most accurate for them and to reflect upon how they can use them while they read. Acknowledging this, it is important to guide their reading process, posing open questions about a chosen text, and establishing follow-up questions and making prompts.

As mentioned above, in metacognition, one of the most important objectives is to help students raise their metacognitive abilities and look for strategies which allow them to engage with a text to comprehend it. At the same time, it is important to raise students’ awareness towards monitoring themselves which enables them to check their processes by assuming a critical stance (Báez, 2004). Students become aware of having a more challenging process where each student has to evidence his or her compromise in building their own opinion regarding a text. As a result, “metacognitive strategies include, but are not limited to, perception, critique, judgment, and decision-making that allow learners to orchestrate and self-regulate their own learning” (Báez, 2004, p. 83).

Thus, this stage entails on the one hand the *selecting process* which takes place at the same moment a reader is choosing the metacognitive reading strategies. Likewise, it relates the objectives with the information needed and the implementation of some strategies according to

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the students' needs. On the other hand, the *monitoring* process which is essential to check and scan if the student is engaging in doing the task and how he or she approaches it. To carry out this stage, learners check how the comprehension of the reading is going. They check their processes and make adjustments if needed.

One of the strategies which could be used in monitoring is contrasting the previous information with the new one to set an intermediate point which fits each other. Another strategy is to use problem solving. In this process, to check and develop critical thinking skills is required. These learning strategies are important to use and help students become independent learners, as Zimmerman and Schunk (2011) argue "self-regulated learning and performance refers to the processes whereby learners personally activate and sustain cognition, affects, and behaviours that are systematically oriented toward the attainment of personal goals" (p. 1). Taking into account the importance of each of these strategies, a reader can use them as he or she prefers while reading.

***Reflecting while reading.*** The last stage is the *evaluation stage*. From a critical point of view, the learner reflects on his or her process contrasting the objectives established at the very beginning and establishing how meaningful and accurate this process was. By analyzing this information, the learner reaches some conclusions about the process done. It is crucial to establish how the strategies used were pertinent to the process and which improvements could be made leaving some open questions to answer in the next exercise.

All of the metacognitive reading strategies mentioned above allow students to manage their learning. In light of this, it is important to mention that self-regulation is a noteworthy process because it implies students'

assessment by themselves as well as teachers' guide. That's why, metacognition

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is reflecting on one's own thinking and learning. Developing awareness of our metacognitive processes helps us to bring control to our learning. By being aware of our learning processes and preferences we are able to regulate our learning endeavors in order to accomplish our goals (Nuñez & Tellez, 2003, p. 83).

By doing so, through self-evaluation, students are able to monitor their own learning process, establishing comparisons or contrasts with the objectives selected at the beginning of the process. To sum up, using metacognitive reading strategies is one of the best ways to self-regulate a reader's reading process.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodological Design**

Nowadays, materials development has become an important research area since it is taking an important role in education. As a teacher researcher and as materials developer, I designed materials not only to innovate but also to gain knowledge through planning, drafting, exploring, editing and implementing materials in the classroom, providing new resources for learners to explore new material, with the purpose of making it relevant, purposeful and engaging for students. Thus, this chapter is divided into two components. The first one is related to the Research Design and the second one to the Instructional Design.

#### **Research Design**

This section entails the research approach, the type of the study, the description of the participants and the instruments selected to carry out the study.

**Approach.** This research focused on determining how the implementation of metacognitive reading strategies enhanced students' reading comprehension. For doing so, the current study is based on the qualitative approach which takes into account the following features. First, this approach collects different data sources through interpretative analysis to make the triangulation of them. Second, with the qualitative data collection the teacher researcher narrates the experiences based on the context and situational details related to the data collected. Third, through deliberation based on the data collected, the teacher researcher interprets it to make a critical reflection and to answer the researcher's question posed at the beginning of the process. In this line of thought,

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Qualitative approach is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists on a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive and naturalistic approach to the world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 3)

In this sense, through observation, I identified the metacognitive reading strategies that best fit each student to enhance their reading comprehension, allowing me to understand each student's learning process. I also collected the data to reflect upon the use of metacognitive reading strategies and their importance in the reading process.

**Type of study.** Action Research is the type of study chosen for the current research defined as follows:

Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes (Mills, 2003, p.4). Therefore, as a teacher researcher, the goal is not only improving my pedagogical practices but also each student's learning process, by means of self-reflection and addressing both students and teachers' needs and interests. By the same token,

Action research is part of a broad movement that has been going on in education (...). It is related to the ideas of 'reflective practice' and the teacher as researcher involves taking a self-reflective, critical, a systematic approach to exploring your own teaching contexts (Burns, 2010, p. 2).

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This led me to say that my study explored students' self-monitoring allowing them to become more critical and autonomous. That is why, the qualitative approach, as well as action research, both helped me to construct knowledge and implement changes in my teaching to enhance my students' reading comprehension. Additionally, "action research is itself a social practice. One general point of convergence among action research and approaches is a new understanding of relationships between researchers and researched -in other terms- rethinking the relationship between theory and practice" (Kemmis, McTaggart and Nixon, 2014, p. 4). Hence, first, I selected the issue; second, I set up a research question to start designing and implementing the research study. After that, I collected the data and I analysed it, establishing conclusions and pedagogical implications by reflecting upon the impact on students' learning process.

**Participants.** This study was carried out at Manuela Beltrán University, a private Institution, located in Bogotá, Colombia. The participants were students from different careers and the English teacher who assumed two roles: a teacher researcher and a materials developer.

**Students.** I selected the students through the convenience sample technique, in which "the only criterion is the convenience of the researcher. Groups chosen by convenience sampling are conducive to self-selection, administrative decision, time of the class, number of the years of exposure and many other polluting influences" (Farrokhi & Hamidabad, 2012, p. 784). Therefore, I selected 6 students whose ages ranged from 18 to 25. The students who are in these ages belong to the young adulthood. This stage is defined by Arnett (2000) as "a time of frequent change as various possibilities in love, work, and worldviews are explored" (as cited in Dimitrova, 2017, p. 255). In other words, adulthood is a time of life when students make the most important decisions for the future. This is a transition period where people start building who they are and exploring their identities by experiencing many things through a wide range of

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possibilities. As Arnett (2000) states “the explorations of emerging adulthood are in part explorations for their own sake, part of obtaining a broad range of life experiences before taking on enduring and limiting adult responsibilities” (as cited in Dimitrova, 2017, p 474). Through this life period, it is important to guide students to think critically; thus, it is an important stage to explore life situations.

***Teacher-researcher and text developer.*** My role as a teacher researcher was to assist and guide my students and I took into account that “Teacher-researchers can be characterised as those practitioners who attempt to better understand their practice, and its impact on their students, by researching the relationship between teaching and learning in their world of work” (Philpott, Scott, & Mercier, 2014, p. 120). Hence, I was able to monitor and guide my students’ learning processes, as well as create didactic materials that helped them develop their reading comprehension; the latter, was the other role that I assumed in this study.

**Data gathering instruments.** For the implementation of this study, I chose three instruments to collect data which were students’ artifacts, one to one interview and field notes. All of these were fundamental not only to collect the necessary information but also to support the findings of this study.

***Students’ artifact.*** This instrument is considered by many reseachers as a great tool to gather information related to students’ products in their learning process. According to Clark & Chopeta (2011), “these are facts, concepts, processes, procedures, and principles” (p. 64). In my case, the worksheets I designed which were implemented throughout the pedagogical intervention became the artifacts of this study. These portrayed the work done by my students when developing the reading process.

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***One-to-one interview:*** I used this instrument to gather data at the end of the intervention. I asked some questions to my students about their perceptions related to the reading process we followed (See Appendix C), bearing in mind that “one-to-one interviews involve just the researcher and the interviewee. This question-response process is repeated until the interviewer has no more questions to ask or until the time allocated for the interview has run out” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2004, p. 207). In such a way, this instrument was a good tool that allowed me to analyze students’ responses in terms of the impact this study had.

***Field Notes.*** Class observation is an efficient instrument to gather information to keep track of students’ behavior, the interaction that takes place among them as well as other aspects which evidence what is going on in a classroom. In this sense, “field notes consist on narrative descriptions of people, places, human, and natural events, patterns of interaction, statements of value and belief and the historical content in which the preceding takes place” (Le Compte & Preissle, 1994, p. 3). This instrument is effective in the way that the observer, who is usually the teacher, makes notes about what happens in the classroom, to identify and analyze the information gathered. Therefore, field notes are “observation notes made during or after a class (e.g. effectiveness of whole group or paired tasks, use of classroom materials, and behaviour of different groups of students or individuals” (Burns, 1999, p. 35). With this in mind, field notes were an efficient instrument that allowed me to analyze the information collected throughout the intervention identifying the obstacles presented and those aspects that could be improved or that went well.

In sum, the instruments mentioned above were piloted before they were implemented and were fundamental for carrying out the analysis of this current study.



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### **Instructional Design**

This section refers to the different steps I followed to implement my proposal. First, I describe the pedagogical intervention based on Tomlinson's Second Language Acquisition Principles (Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009), then, I explain the instructional objectives which guided the process, followed by the theory of the nature of language and language learning that supported the pedagogical intervention. Besides, I describe, the methodological approach and the instructional phases I followed based on the use of metacognitive reading strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension.

**Pedagogical intervention.** My pedagogical intervention is based on the design of material based on metacognitive reading strategies which took into account the second language acquisition principles proposed by Tomlinson (1988). These principles were essential to set up my objectives, as well as to select the material that best suited my learners. In doing so, I chose five of the SLA principles (as cited in Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2009), which I considered worthy and purposeful. They were related to my research, fostered my students' learning process, and enriched my teaching practices.

One of the SLA principles is innovation and this principle is fundamental in this study, due to the fact that my intention was to "achieve impact through novelty, variety, attractive presentation, and appealing content" (Tomlinson, 1988). This principle is crucial, since I consider it fundamental to foster students' reading comprehension by motivating learners to relate the new input given in the texts with the background knowledge they have related to social issues, through the five different worksheets. While creating the material, I select shocking pictures to encourage students to talk about those by using their background knowledge as well as catching readings which let students reflect upon those social issues.

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As long as students are motivated, they become engaged in the activities in a meaningful manner. Each student gains knowledge through self-monitoring and exploration to develop more self-confidence and interest. Hence, Freire and Macedo (1987) claim that a “the student is the subject of the process of learning to read and write as an act of knowing and of creating” (p. 34). As it is well known, the student is at center of the educational process because he or she is the person who knows about his or her own learning outcomes and is also the one who can make changes to improve it. With this in mind, one of the objectives of the current study was to let students know about the importance of becoming an independent learner. In these order of ideas, when students learn to self-monitor themselves, they can become more active learners.

Second, I consider relevant to “help learners develop self-confidence” (Tomlinson, 1988). For doing so, metacognition plays an important role, since it “requires students to be aware of their learning, to evaluate their learning needs, to generate strategies to meet their needs, and to implement those strategies” (Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser, 2009, p. 1). This process entails self-monitoring by becoming aware of the importance of using reading strategies, while implementing materials during the reading process. Besides, it allowed students to enhance the use of the reading strategies which best suited their needs to develop and improve their reading comprehension.

The third principle is related to students’ autonomy (Tomlinson, 1988) which is important to develop through metacognition. By means of students’ autonomy and self-assessment, they can face challenges that come up through the reading process. Thus, this principle is called “self-investment, which aids the learner to make efficient use of the resources to facilitate self-discovery” (Tomlinson, 1988). Here, students put into practice the metacognitive strategies and

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their needs and skills to apply them in their reading practice. In this way, students foster their skills to enhance their reading process to facilitate self-discovery.

In a similar way, is it important to highlight that it is not only the language output but also the language input. For this reason, both of them are considered applicable to enhance the reading process, since “reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 29). Hence, students associate their knowledge and experiences with different controversial texts by means of “critical education, in which the learner becomes an active participant in the appropriation of knowledge in relation to lived experience” (Morrow & Torres, 2002, p. 1). In such a way, students contrast the input with the output to build new knowledge.

The fourth principle relates to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) concept of helping “learners feel at ease. SLA research has revealed, students seem to learn more and in shorter time when being relaxed and comfortably engaged in learning activities” (as cited in Tomlinson, 1988). In this regard, in my study, it was not only taking into account what students knew about the social issues but also making the most of the cultural background they have and considering that “the more we know about what we are reading, the easier it will be to read” (Goodman & Wilde, 1996, p. 106). That is why, it is essential to appreciate students’ upbringing so, they can interpret and give meaning to a text.

Lastly, it is crucial to stimulate the left and the right brain lateralization (Tomlinson, 1998) through intellectual activities related to reading skills. On the one hand, students apply metacognitive reading strategies to comprehend a text through analyzing and recognizing what a text truly means. On the other hand, the right zone is developed by virtue of a creativity process, through interpreting a text and putting in context the authors’ criterion.

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To conclude, all of the principles mentioned above are essential to develop the current research study, providing students have different ways to read and reflect and become aware of what is known and what is learned. This process entails not only to comprehend what a text means but also to give sense to it by gaining knowledge.

**Instructional objectives.** The following are the objectives that guided my pedagogical intervention.

***General Objective.*** To create and implement materials that allows students to read a text from a critical perspective.

***Specific Objectives:*** (a) To assess the designed materials focused on social issues to develop students' reading comprehension; (b) To foster the use of metacognitive reading strategies among university students to improve reading comprehension; and (c) To monitor students' reading process through the implementation of metacognitive reading strategies.

**Intervention as innovation.** The concept of innovation is important nowadays in education since it is essential to “achieve impact through novelty, variety, attractive presentation and appealing content” (Núñez & Téllez, 2009, p. 2). Due to the increasing need for doing so, materials development contributes to foster students' learning process, bearing in mind that

The MD framework plays a fundamental role when developing innovative materials.

Teachers acquire the ability to generate something that may be regarded as new and their answers showed that innovation has a major role in MD and that teacher-developed materials can be seen as an innovative practice in the EFL classroom. There are three main reasons for it: first, it involves a sequence of opportunities for decision-making; second, it makes them become an active agent of change in language teaching; and third,

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it deems students' needs and expectations as key elements in designing their ID for their research project (Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos, 2012, p. 24)

In its broader sense, innovative materials empower not only teachers' pedagogical practice but also students' learning process by taking into account students' needs and accomplish students' expectations when studying English as a foreign language.

That is why this study focused on finding out what metacognitive reading strategies fit students best to enhance their reading comprehension. To achieve this purpose, I used social issues which was an interesting topic for my students since the problems that were addressed are current and controversial and affect us all. Thus, this study was innovative for myself and for the students since the new activities designed allowed them to find out what kind of readings and activities were the most suitable and interesting to foster their learning process. In addition to this, I implemented different innovative materials that benefited my process as materials developer.

In other words, intervention can be innovative as far as the teacher provides new tools for students to work with. In doing so, through visual and analytical items students reflected upon how different social issues could be analyzed and this allowed students to state their own opinion on the matter. Thus, students did not only read the texts but also expressed what they thought about these topics. For me as teacher researcher, I reflected upon my own reading process to identify how I used the metacognitive reading strategies. My stance toward the topics was also useful for guiding the intervention.

**Theory of the nature of language and language learning.** The functional perspective includes the social context as a mean to understand and express students' perceptions and experiences to contrast them with the new knowledge they acquire, by reflecting upon a text,

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giving sense to it, and building their own criterion about it. According to Freire and Macedo (1987) reading “does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (p. 29). Hence, students connected their knowledge and experiences to the reading about issues related to different social issues. By doing so, they could contrast what they knew with the new information they were acquiring.

In this sense, the role of analytical learning is fundamental in the reading process since students develop their cognitive skills through analyzing the information given in a text, by using deduction or induction; this allows checking students’ understanding (Tudor, 2001). This perspective is important since students analyse what they can do about some social issues and how these problems can be solved.

**Methodological approach underlying the pedagogical intervention.** Critical reading is the learning approach selected since it is important for students to reflect upon social issues in a critical way. It is necessary for them to understand how the communities work in the world: it is important “not only to read the word, but also the world” (Freire & Macedo, 2011, p. 4). As Paulo Freire states: “our theory and practice and the method we can derive from the dialectic of their relationship” (Freire & Macedo, 1984, p. 7). In this regard, it is very important for students to have a close relationship to what we teach; not only obtaining knowledge but also engaging the learners with the materials by means of the pedagogical intervention. As Freire and Macedo (1987) argue, literacy “is part of the process of becoming self-critical about the historically constructed nature of one’s experience” (p. 5). In that sense, through the reading and discussing of social issues, students were able to analyze and give their critical point of view about them.

**Connection of the pedagogical intervention with the research question.** The relation between the instructional design and the research question is focused on delimitating the

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impact that the designed material had on students' reading comprehension through the use of metacognitive reading strategies. These strategies were essential to foster reading comprehension and to enhance the students' understanding, as well as to monitor their own reading process. Taking this into consideration, "student is the subject of the process of learning to read and write as an act of knowing and of creating" (Freire and Macedo, 1987, p. 34). In this way, one of the most important things is recognizing students' autonomy and allowing them to self-asses their process.

**Suggested instructional phases.** Concerning the use of materials, I compared the different frameworks provided by some authors to establish comparisons and differences between them and to be able to come up with my own framework. In terms of Graves' (1996) framework and regarding its principles, the similarities I found were: the needs assessment, establishing goals and objectives, conceptualizing content, selecting and developing materials, organizing content and activities, considering of resources and constraints. The difference I identified with my study is in regards to the aspect of evaluation. The second M.D framework I analyzed was Masuhara (1998) in terms of a course design procedure framework. The similarities I found were: needs analysis, determine the goals and objectives, methodology of the materials and the differences with my study were related to testing and evaluation and the syllabus design. The third one comes from Jolly and Bolitho (1998) within a framework for writing materials. The similarities were: identifying needs, intervention of pedagogical realization of materials, finding appropriate exercises and activities, physical production, production and use, and identification of a problem. The difference I found was a contextualized realization of the proposed new materials. The fourth M.D framework is the Course and Materials Design proposed by Núñez, Pineda, and Téllez (2004). The similarities I found were:

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the needs analysis, establishing objectives, selection and sequence of the tasks, skills to foster in relation to the materials created, assessment and evaluation of goals achieved and the learning teaching activities.

Also, from the essential components in the process of creating and adapting materials by Núñez and Téllez (2009), the similarities I identified were: the needs assessment, selecting goals and objectives, selecting and developing materials and activities, organizing content and activities and the difference was the evaluation component. In a similar way, Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos, and Ramos (2009) based on the materials development scaffolding framework, I found the following principles in common: the needs assessment and analysis, developing the material, piloting materials, revising and evaluating the materials and making adjustments if needed. And finally, Núñez, Téllez and Castellanos (2012) framework, the similarities I found were: the needs assessment, identifying the method and the approach underlying the materials, selecting goals and objectives, selecting and organizing content, organizing activities, assessing, trialling and making adjustments if needed.

***Proposed materials development framework.*** Taking the above into consideration, I proposed my own framework SRAI. It contains seventh stages described as follows: First, identifying students' needs and interests by observing and interviewing students; second, reflecting upon what kind of materials fit my students' interests and looking for contextualized and familiarized content; third, establishing the objectives for doing so; fourth, adapting and creating materials; fifth, piloting the materials created and making adjustments if needed; sixth, implementing the materials and giving feedback based on students' needs and correlating this information with my field notes and finally, identifying the pedagogical implications, as well as the benefits and challenges faced while carrying out the study.



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In what follows, I describe in detail each one of the phases I carried out in the implementation.

***Setting the tone:*** The first stage of this pedagogical intervention was mainly focused on the Critical Pedagogy approach and guiding students to monitor their own reading and learning processes. Throughout this meaningful process and according to the observations made in class, the survey applied and students' interests, I reflected on how students tackled a reading and how they could improve their reading skills when exploring a text, as well as when posing questions before starting to read it.

***Sight, smell, touch while exploring a text:*** While reading, the reader establishes a worthy relation with the text. Hence, it was important to scrutinize how the comprehension process develops in accordance to finding out not only what the author means but also the readers' interpretation, which is built while the reading process is developing.

***Exploring a new text:*** Beyond that a reader comprehends what she or he reads, it is fundamental to interpret it and build one's own criterion about the reading. Similarly, the reader reflected upon the metacognitive strategies he or she uses in his or her reading process.

***Implementation of the materials:*** The study was focused on creating six worksheets related to the reading plan corresponding to the Intermediate level. These worksheets were piloted with a group of students from pre-intermediate level before applying them with my students; thus, I made the corresponding adjustments as needed. Besides, the worksheets were applied in the Computer Lab.

In these worksheets different metacognitive reading strategies were included and students put them into practice when reading. Thus, I designed six worksheets related to social issues. Each worksheet contained a text related to this topic and different activities which aimed to

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foster the use of metacognitive reading strategies and for students to develop the critical skill where they had to propose new alternatives to solve the social issues. In each of the worksheets provided, students predicted what the reading was about, taking into account the title of the text and the images (if shown). Also, the reader related the prior knowledge to the new information given. This allowed the learning process to be more independent since the students monitored their own processes. Within the worksheets, students inferred and summarized information to reinforce their comprehension about the causes, effects, and implications that the social issues have in our society. They thought about possible solutions to avoid and reduce these problems which affect people's well-being. Students gave suggestions and showed their concern by reflecting about those problems and their possible solutions. As can be appreciated,

The benefits for teachers are the teachers' empowerment, increase of students' motivation, the need to listen to students' voices to consider their needs, the requirement of contextualizing teaching materials, the awareness teachers can benefit from in terms of having a holistic view of education, and both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills they acquire by developing materials (Ramos & Aguirre, 2014, p. 139)

That is why, working in such a way with my students was a key factor within the EFL classroom by considering their needs and interests. Also, as a teacher researcher I reflected upon the process carried out. With this in mind, the following were the parts developed in each worksheet.

**Planning:** Predict what the reading will be about, taking into account the title of the text and the images (if showed). Also, the reader relates the previous knowledge and what he or she has experienced with the new information given.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

**Monitoring:** Connect new knowledge to own experiences. So, the learning process will be more independent since the students use the metacognitive reading strategies while they read. Hence, they monitor their own processes.

**Problem solving:** Infer what the information is about, even when it is not explicit. In order to solve the problem understanding it and, trying to give sense to what is incomprehensible.

**Evaluating:** Summarize the information given in the text, checking students' understanding. To reinforce students' comprehension about the causes, effects and implications that social issues have.

**Remembering:** Reflect upon the effects that social issues have in society. To think about possible solutions to avoid and reduce these issues which affect people's well-being. Giving suggestions and showing their importance by reflecting about those problems and their possible solutions.

**Self-assessment:** Some questions are posed in regard to the three theoretical constructs that frame this research study.

These factors permeated my Materials Development framework since my research explored students' reading strategies by self-monitoring as well as teacher's assessment. In such a way, students became aware of how they used to do their reading process while reading texts in English and how this process changed because of using metacognitive reading strategies while reading. In addition to this, as a teacher researcher and developer, I realized that students liked to talk about social issues since they are familiar with them and in some cases they have experienced some of them. So, those texts were appealing for my students and became a good source to work with in class.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

***Informed consent.*** The director of the Language Center signed the consent form giving me permission to carry out the study at Manuela Beltrán University as well as those students who agreed to volunteer and participate in the research. For doing so, it was necessary to elaborate the informed consents, in which the participants agreed to be part of this study (See Appendix A and B).

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

## Worksheet sample



UNIVERSIDAD MANUELA BELTRÁN

Resolución 4974 de Diciembre 29 de 2004 Min. Educación

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objective:** To talk about sexism and its consequences on women and give possible solutions to achieve gender equality.

**1. Warm up:** Look at the following words and find them in the crossword.

**Learning strategy:** Cognitive strategy  
Guessing meaning from context

- a. Inferiority   b. Submission   c. Mistreat   d. Discrimination   e. Gender  
f. Pride   g. Segregation   h. Abuse   i. Sexism   j. Domestic  
k. Misogynist   l. Misogynist

A	R	E	W	O	P	I	G	J	K	M	I	S	O	G	Y	N	I	S	T
W	A	S	W	P	E	R	E	E	L	O	M	E	S	A	I	O	P	T	W
J	D	I	S	C	R	I	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N	P	I	O	L	X
I	M	L	O	A	N	I	C	E	L	R	L	P	H	L	O	S	I	O	C
J	N	G	E	L	A	W	D	D	I	N	E	O	N	E	T	I	M	Y	G
A	C	D	A	T	U	F	A	E	N	E	R	F	L	O	O	T	T	P	I
L	V	V	F	O	R	T	T	E	V	I	S	I	S	E	X	I	S	M	G
I	E	I	N	A	T	A	D	I	A	N	T	E	L	L	R	N	E	S	A
S	R	D	E	V	E	W	I	N	R	E	T	O	I	O	S	U	S	D	I
C	F	I	S	R	P	S	U	B	M	I	S	S	I	O	N	P	O	F	O
O	S	O	T	I	N	O	L	A	S	K	P	R	A	L	D	S	L	I	H
S	Y	S	F	T	N	O	I	T	A	G	E	R	G	E	S	L	J	U	O

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

R	I	O	R	N	T	I	E	R	K	F	S	A	W	O	R	I	M	O	U
M	R	C	O	O	K	W	A	L	N	L	I	O	R	W	A	B	U	S	E
E	T	D	O	M	E	S	T	I	C	V	I	O	L	E	N	C	E	L	S

2. Look at each picture and tell your partner what they are doing and share your ideas with the group. Follow the example below.

**Learning strategy:** Cognitive strategy  
Associate the pictures with the meaning.



a. E.g. He is yelling at her

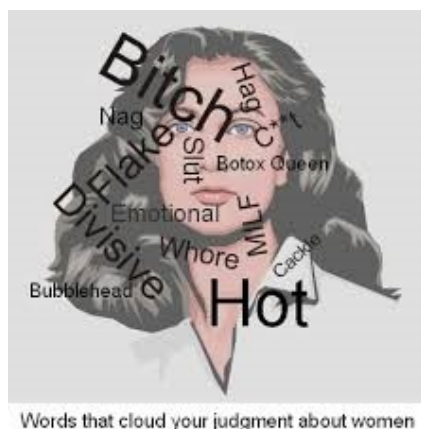


b. \_\_\_\_\_

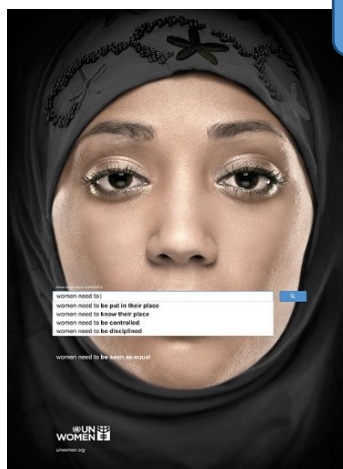


c. \_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you feel when you see the following pictures and why?



a. E.g. I feel mad at people who  
criticize women's image because



b. \_\_\_\_\_

**Learning strategy:** Cognitive strategy  
Guessing meaning from context



c. \_\_\_\_\_

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

they do not even know what a

woman's role is.

4. Watch the following video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0xoKiH8JJM> and write the main ideas

**Learning strategy:** Metacognitive strategy  
Remember what you watch

- a. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ c. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_ e. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. Read the following text. While reading it, write a gloss in front of each paragraph and answer the questions which you will find while you read the text.

**Learning strategy:** Metacognitive strategy  
Remember what you read

### Sexism and Violence Against Girls and Women

Many believe that sexism has been eradicated and that women have achieved full equality. Middle class girls and young women have many more opportunities and options than was the case forty years ago. Women have achieved success in a range of professions. Many girls and women do not identify themselves as feminists because they do not believe that such struggles for equality are necessary in this day and age.

This belief is proven false upon examination. It becomes clear that inequality is still a reality when Canadian social conditions affecting women are exposed. The frequency of sexual assault and all forms of violence against women and girls is another key indicator and devastating consequence of inequality (see *Women's Inequality*, produced in September, 2008 by the Canadian Feminist Alliance for International Action, at [westcoastleaf.org](http://westcoastleaf.org)).

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Sexism has not disappeared, though it may have grown new sprouts connected to the systemic roots of inequality.

Description: Sexism is predicated upon the notion that biological sex divides men and women into distinct, separate and hierarchically-ordered groups. What emerges from this social arrangement is the primacy of men and everything that is considered “masculine” over women and everything that is considered “feminine”. The result is the undervaluing, hatred or disparagement of everything and everyone labelled feminine, known as “misogyny”. Unequal power relations between men and women result in various forms of male dominance (for example, sexual assault and violence against women). These filter through society’s institutions and down to interactions between individual men and women. **a. What is misogyny?**

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**b. What are the consequences of sexism?**

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### *Continue reading*

A strict polarization between what is considered “masculine” and what is considered “feminine” (behaviour, attributes, appearance, activity, etc.) is manufactured and enforced through rigid gender norms. Women and men are expected to live based on gender norms and are punished when they break from those expectations

**c. Do you think there are big differences between genders? Why? Explain.**

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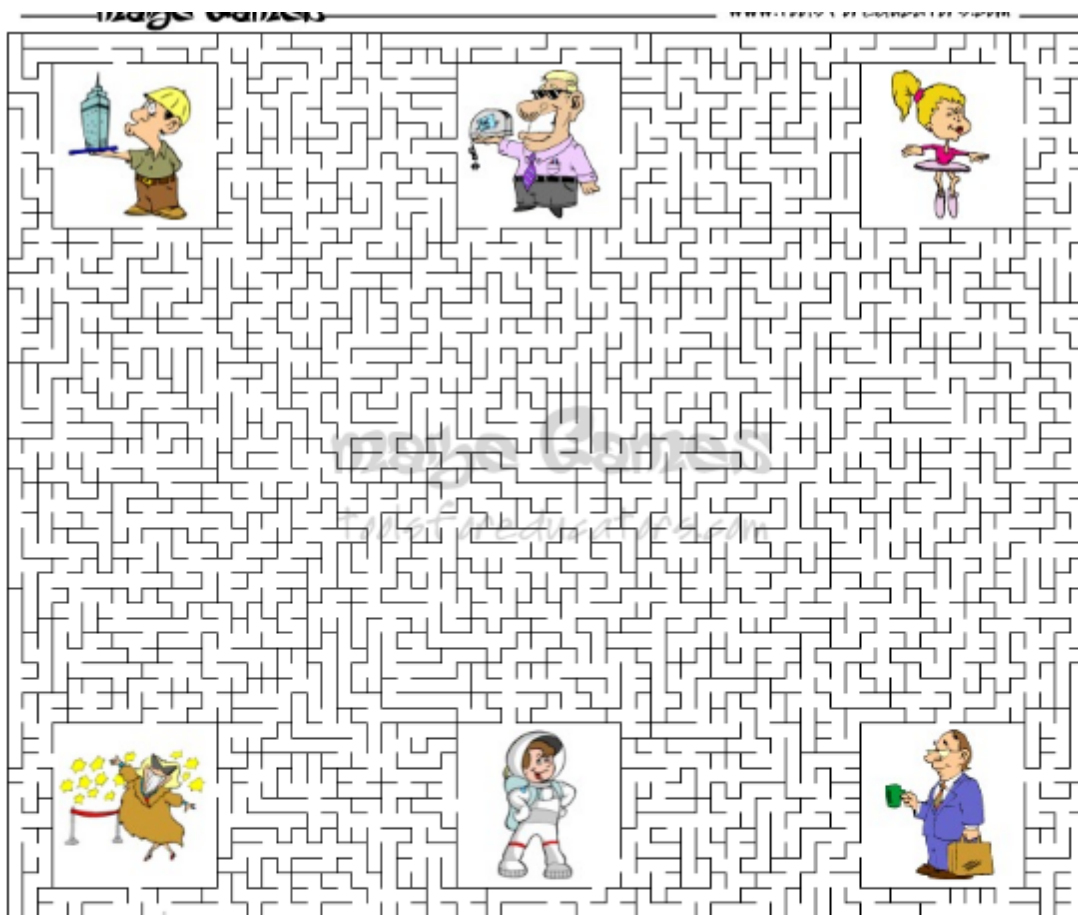
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## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

6. From the center of the maze, find your way out reaching each figure to answer the questions.

**Learning strategy:** Metacognitive strategy  
Remember what you read



1. What are the stereotypes of being a woman and a man? Mention some examples

2. What do I experience to be a man or a woman?

3. How does society influence to be a woman and a man?

4. Is the sexism a social issue? Why?

5. Are there any difference of being a woman and a man to get a job?

6. Make your own question

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

### *Continue reading*

#### **Explicit Forms of Sexism**

In a school setting, conscious or unconscious beliefs about male superiority can reproduce and reinforce women's inequality in many ways. They can lead to blatant expressions of misogyny, disdain and hatred of women, their sexuality and everything that is considered feminine (which may be perpetrated either by girls and women or by boys and men), for example:

- Sexist slurs and jokes
- Misogynist insults – “girl” as an insult to boys
- Rumors about girls' sexual activities
- Demeaning sexual terms, such as “whore”, or “slut”
- Sexist cyber-bullying, for example, demeaning sexual terms directed at someone on Facebook
- Sexist, misogynist websites

Sexism can also be manifested through direct physical and sexual interpersonal violence by boys and men against women and girls, for example:

Sexual harassment (rating girls, calling out sexual comments, inappropriate and unwanted touching)

Sexual assault (including pressure to have sex or sexual contact)

Violence and control in intimate or romantic relationships

- give voice to our needs and experiences;
- be heard and have our experiences and concerns validated by the school community;
- engage in a process with all members of the school community at every level to build bridges and create a climate of fairness and belonging for all.
- Male privilege tends to give men greater access to certain social, political and cultural benefits, such as higher social status and income levels, positions of authority and greater control over decision-making. This privilege reinforces and perpetuates the power imbalance between men and women. The advantages incurred may come to be seen as “normal”, thereby reinforcing beliefs in male superiority. The school environment, like any other location in our society, is a setting where these power dynamics are at work.
- We are not to blame for privileges we have due to our biological sex. Often there is nothing we can do as individuals to eliminate our privilege. Instead, we can take stock of them and take responsibility for how we use them by attempting to offset the imbalance of power they reinforce. Gaining awareness of the ways in which we benefit from our privilege helps ensure









## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

that we do not perpetuate sexist or misogynous

beliefs.

- Taken from: <https://www.safeatschool.ca/plm/equity-and-inclusion/understanding-sexism-racism-and-homophobia/sexism-and-violence>.

7. Read the following instructions and play the game, using dice and tokens.

	What is sexism?	Move ahead 3 spaces.	Move ahead 3 spaces	Go back 3 spaces
				Mention the main differences between men and women
Go back 2 spaces	Move back 2 spaces	What is misogyny?	Go back two spaces	Move ahead 2 spaces
Go back 2 spaces				
Go back 4 spaces	Mention 2 examples of sexism	Move ahead 1 space	Mention two possible solutions to eradicate sexism	Move ahead 1 space
				Are you sexist? Why?
	Is Colombia a sexist country? Why?	Move ahead 1 space	Make your own question!	Move ahead 1 space

### Galactic Challenge

Make printable worksheets and games at [TaraForEducators.com](http://TaraForEducators.com)

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

**SELF-ASSESSMENT**

Mark one box with a X. Write your comments if needed.

<b>READING COMPREHENSION</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Did I make predictions using images? (Before reading?)			
Did I make connections between images and context to increase understanding of the text?			
Did I retell the story while reading and answering the questions of the text?			
Did I make inferences while reading the text?			
Did I link the meaning of the text with my own experience or criterion?			
Did I explain my point of view while I was answering comprehension questions?			
<b>METACOGNITIVE READING COMPREHENSION</b>			

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Did I monitor my own comprehension while I was answering questions of the text?			
Did I make inferences from pictures and the text?			
Was I able to answer most of the questions?			
Did I predict and confirm what I thought when reading the text?			
Did I self-correct mistakes while I was answering questions or doing the activities required?			
Did I learn new vocabulary?			
Did I reflect upon the social issue, engaging in discussions about what I read?			
Did I support my ideas while I was participating in the different activities?			
Did I use glosses to retell the text?			

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

<b>LANGUAGE LEARNING MATERIALS</b>			
Did I consider the worksheet innovative?			
Did I use the input to understand the text and to construct my own output?			
Did I monitor my learning process while doing the worksheet?			
Did I feel self-confident while doing the worksheet, making use of self-investment?			
Did I use my previous knowledge and cultural background to understand the texts? ?			
Did I stimulate the left and the right brain lateralization through reading?			
What impact did the worksheet have on you?			

## **Chapter IV**

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Data Analysis Procedure**

To start, it is important to take into account what Merriam states in regards to data gathering; these “are collected in systematic ways to provide the evidential base from which to make interpretations and statements intended to advance knowledge and understanding concerning a research question or problem” (as cited in Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p.172). In this regard, this research study took into account different steps to gather and analyze the data using the Grounded Theory which “involves the progressive identification and integration of categories of meaning from data” (Willig, 2013, p. 70). This allowed me to come up with different categories

Thus, I followed some steps in my research referred to by Willig (2013) as: “the researcher collects some data, explores the data through initial open coding, establishes tentative linkages between categories, and then returns to the field to collect further data. Data collection is progressively focused and informed by the emerging theory” (p. 73). In such a way, I took the information gathered from the three instruments: students’ artifacts, field notes and a one to one interview and I analyzed it accordingly. Thus, I took into account the three important characteristics that define a research study which are: first, “Data are always constructed by researchers during the research process (...)second data collection is always selective and (...) third, data are constructed by means of the collection process and shaped by what is collected and what is not” (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 172).

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Consequently, for the analysis, first I collected all the worksheets and I started to underline the most important ideas that called my attention, summarizing the ideas taken from the worksheets. After that, I used color coding, by making relations from the excerpts chosen. In such a way, I did data triangulation to analyse the information gathered, as explained below.

Data triangulation is the use of a variety of data sources, including time, space and persons, in a study. Findings can be corroborated and any weaknesses in the data can be compensated for by the strengths of other data, thereby increasing the validity and reliability of the results (Hales, 2010, p. 14).

Then I triangulated the data which helped me to link the similar information taken from the excerpts so to finally come up with categories and subcategories of this study which are explained below.

### Research Categories

I established two categories with its corresponding subcategories that give account of the research question I posed for this study which was: How do the design and implementation of materials focused on metacognitive reading strategies enhance reading comprehension among university students in an EFL classroom? The categories are displayed in Table 1 and are explained below.

**Table 1**

*Categories and subcategories*

<b>Designing Materials to Enhance Active Reading</b>	Worksheets focused on social issues: A meaningful topic to discuss and reflect upon
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## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

	Developing worksheets to recognize and use metacognitive reading strategies to foster reading comprehension
<b>Reading the World by Making Use of One's Experiences</b>	Relating people's experiences with the content of the texts
	Students' voice: a way to state their own position

**Designing materials to enhance active reading.** Creating materials is a meaningful procedure that enriches students' learning process, since the teacher can put into practice the knowledge about a topic to recreate it and make it interesting for his or her students. That is why, through the creation of different materials, my students got engaged in learning. With this in mind, the creation and implementation of materials is an important field of study, considering that one of the main objectives of materials development is making appealing and innovative materials. In such a way, "teachers should develop contextualised materials that respond to their students' needs. Materials that address learners' genuine interests, knowledge, experience and understanding of language use create effective learning environments" (Cárdenas, 2008; Núñez et al., 2009; Núñez, Pineda, & Téllez, 2004; Tomlinson, 2003).

Hence, this research study looked for ways to create appealing materials that allowed students to improve their reading comprehension, taking into account that the activities included in the materials were related to students' needs and interests. That is why, the creation of materials was focused not only in the selection of the readings but also in the selection of images so that students would become aware that written texts as well as images can be read.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Hence, this first category is divided into two subcategories; the first one, *Worksheets focused on social issues: a meaningful topic to discuss and reflect upon* and the second one *Developing worksheets to recognize and use metacognitive reading strategies to foster reading comprehension* which are described below.

### ***Worksheets focused on social issues: a meaningful topic to discuss and reflect upon.***

This first subcategory is related to the design of the worksheets where social issues were the main topic to create and develop each activity, taking into account that “in the Colombian context, there is the need to explore the effects of designing materials by Colombian teachers for their specific contexts” (Ramos & Aguirre, 2015, p. 135) That is why, social issues allow reflection and students can discuss and come up with proposals to find solutions to the problems faced in our society. This depends on how each social issue is defined and understood as well as on the context where it takes place. Thus, a problem needs to be identified as well as its causes, consequences and the impact that it can have in society. From this perspective, for each one of the five worksheets designed, a social issue was selected. These were animal extinction, sexism, racism, drugs addiction and delinquency. Within each worksheet, there were four activities which guided the reading process. The first one was concerned with students’ background knowledge. This part was focused on relating some images or exercises activating students’ background knowledge. The participants related their previous knowledge with what they already knew, building new meaning since, they not only gave their point of view about the topic but also they took into account the information shown, to establish comparisons or contrasts. The second one was reading a text using different reading strategies such as focusing on key words, underlining the main ideas, writing some glosses or rereading a text. The third one was answering some questions related to a reading where students monitored their understanding

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

using some reading strategies, and the fourth one was finding some possible solutions to solve those social issues and come with some proposals, where students gave their opinions about them.

Those strategies mentioned above were essential to elaborate the worksheets bearing in mind that “Teachers are the ones who really know how to assess their students’ needs” (Ramos & Aguirre, 2015, p. 136). In this sense, each worksheet allowed students to make predictions about what the reading was about and relate their experiences with the new information given in the text. In this study, when the reader approached a text or saw an image, he/she reflected upon the social issue, relating the input given with the new information to make sense of it, scrutinizing and combining his/her own comprehension of the text to propose some possible solutions.

Therefore, the worksheets I designed were interesting for students, because they used them as the main tool to gain knowledge and participate in the activities proposed. Besides, the social issues were significant for the students since these topics were familiar to their lives. In light of this, Mishan and Chambers (2011) argue that “the importance for language learning activities is to be meaningful, purposeful and contextualized” (p. 5). This can be evidenced below:

“Yo pienso que es significativo hablar sobre los problemas sociales, dado que estos nos permiten reflexionar sobre nuestro estilo de vida, y también cómo nosotros podemos mejorar o cambiar algunas cosas que no están bien hechas. También, me pareció interesante usar diferentes lecturas para adquirir conocimiento e interpretar la información dada por los textos, comparando o contrastando esta con nuestro punto de vista” (sic)

(One to one interview, June 5th, Ss D.M).

I think social issues are meaningful to talk about them, due to they allow us to reflect upon our lifestyle and also how we can improve or change some things that are not well done. Also, I found interesting to use different readings

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

to gain more knowledge and interpret the information provided from the texts and compare or contrast it with our point of view' (sic).

(One to one interview, June 5th , Ss D.M, translation done by the author).

In a similar way, other students mentioned the following in regards to the material used:

“A mí, me gusto crear mapas mentales, porque yo podía anotar las ideas principales de los textos y la actividad con el dado para recordar vocabulario”

(One to one interview, June 5th , Ss D.M).

“I liked creating mind maps, because I could write down the principal ideas from texts and the activity with dice to remember vocabulary”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss L.E, translation done by the author.

“Me gustaron las imagenes, porque yo las relacione con lo que yo conozco, mis experiencias”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P.

“A mí me gustaron las guías, porque yo relacioné la información que conocía con las imágenes, los textos unos más que otros y los juegos que estaban al final”.

“I liked the images, because I relate them with what I know, my experiences”

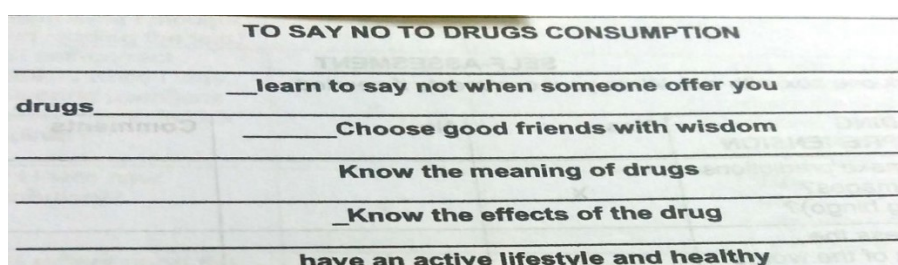
One to one interview, June 5th, Ss D.A, translation done by the author.

These excerpts evidence that the students liked the materials created, since they mentioned that they enjoyed doing the activities from the worksheets because they could take advantage of these to learn vocabulary or to write down main ideas of a text. In this regard, the materials allowed students to learn by doing.

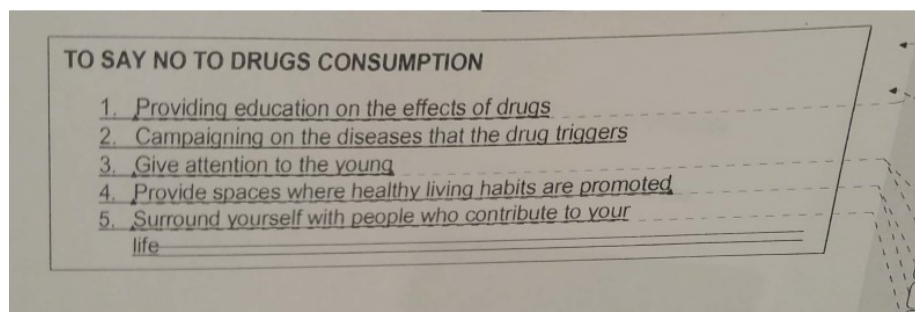
On the other hand, the materials provided input catching students' attention and encouraging them to reflect and discuss about social issues, to try to come up with possible solutions to improve or change some of them. In this sense, the students were able to think about

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

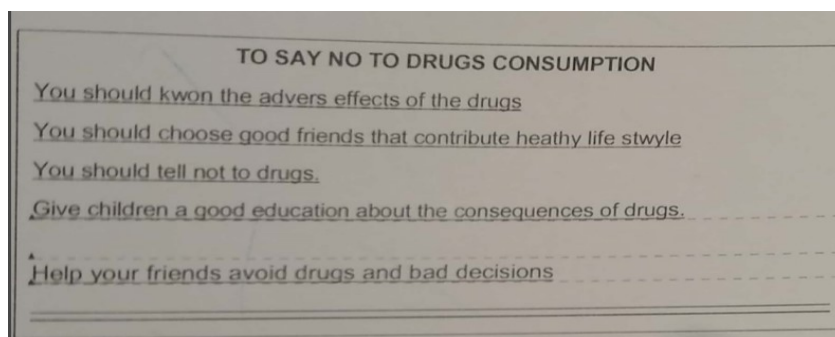
the problems and based on their experiences, they compared what they already knew with the new input given from the materials to construct meaning and create their own point of view. Moreover, by discussing about the different social issues, the students mentioned that one of the most problematic but current social problems is drugs consumption since some of them have tried them or know some friends that have done so. That is why, through the activities designed in the worksheet called *Have you ever consumed drugs*, students proposed some ideas to avoid becoming addicted to drugs as shown below.



Artifact, 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss M.P



Artifact, 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss D.A



Artifact, 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss L.S

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Additionally, in the next excerpts students gave some ideas on how they could prevent becoming drug consumers. They even mentioned some proposals to contribute solving this social issue as

seen below.

- M.H: Foster education.
- Explain the consequences of consuming drugs
- L.S In institutions people should create campaigns to prevent drugs consumption
- Families should be careful with their kids to explain how bad it is being a drug consumer.
- Government should create policies to eradicate the sale of drugs
- D.A I think that it is essential to say no when someone offers you drugs to consume, in the very beginning you can feel excited but later it became a problem and an addiction

Field Notes May 8th, Ss M.H, L.S, D.A

Based on the examples provided above, the students mentioned some key ideas to prevent consuming drugs at an early age. In such a way, one of the most important aspects mentioned was to 'foster education'. In this activity, the students read the texts meaningfully and reflected upon ways to help eradicate drugs consumption. On the other hand, another problem that was addressed was the fact that people experience sexism around the world. As shown below, there are plenty of stereotypes that define the women's role in society and these were analyzed based on some images that student saw in the worksheets.

2. Look at each picture and tell your partner what they are doing and share your ideas with the group. Follow the example below.

**Learning strategy: Cognitive strategy**  
Associate the pictures with the meaning

Artifact, 2<sup>th</sup> worksheet, April 17th

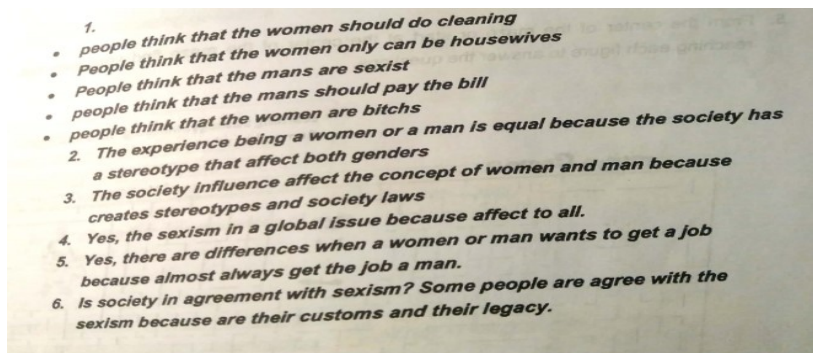
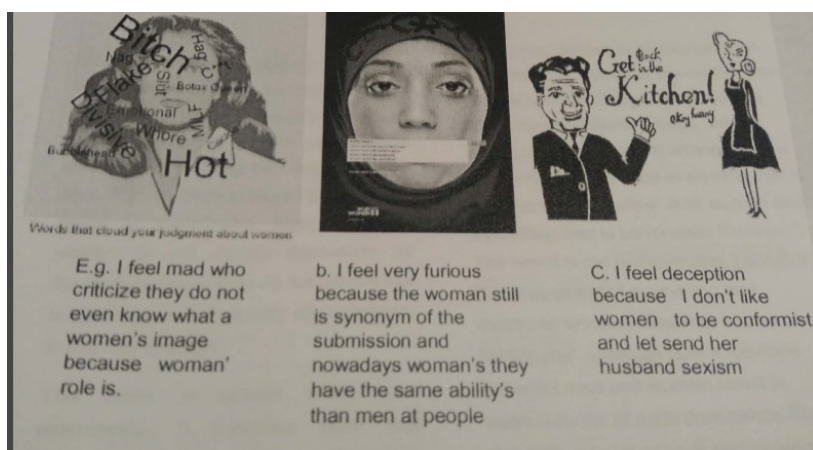
3. How do you feel when you see the following pictures and why?

**Learning strategy: Cognitive strategy**  
Guessing meaning from context

Words that cloud your judgment about women

Artifact, 2<sup>th</sup> worksheet, April 17th

# FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Artifact, 2<sup>th</sup> worksheet, April 17th, Ss M.P

Artifact, 2<sup>th</sup> worksheet, April 17th, Ss L.

The samples show the type of ideas that the students came up with after reflecting upon the women's role in current society as well as about sexism. In such a way, the students mentioned that there are some stereotypes which define what the women's role is in society. With this in mind, the students showed that women are the ones who should work at home and reduce their lives to only being housewives as well as being submissive. In addition to this, the students expressed that there is a stereotypical imaginary that consider that women are sexual objects, taking into consideration the excerpt that states that "women are bitches". In such a way, one of the students said that she feels furious and disappointed about those images.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Also they stated:

L.E Colombian men are sexist.

-In Colombia, many women are mistreated by their couples

L.S Men want all the chores at home are made by their wives or their children

-Men considered women as slaves

Finally, the third question was focused on they

think there are big differences between

genders. So, Ss replied: Yes, because the

society allows it, mainly within families,

women cooks and serve food to their

husbands.

Field notes April 17th, Ss L.S, L.E, D.A

Based on students' criteria, we can infer that there is a generalized idea that some Colombian men are sexist. Thus, students highlighted the fact that some men mistreat their couples since they sometimes think that the women's role is related to being housewives, doing all the chores at home without earning money and taking care of the children, or even they are considered as slaves. In opposition to these ideas, one student states the following:

"Yo pienso que el sexismo fue un tema útil para discutir. Sin embargo, creo que en general los hombres piensan que hoy en día, los hombres no son tan machistas como lo eran antes".

L.E: I think that sexism was an useful topic to discuss about. However, men in general think that nowadays Colombian men are not as sexist as they used to be

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.H, translation done by the author

"I have seen how some men mistreat their couples in the street, it is disgusting".

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss L.E, translation done by the author



## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

"I have heard how some men shout their couples, for example they say: you are a housewife and I have to bring the food and everything for you".

(One to one interview, June 5th, Ss L.S, translation done by the author).

Bearing in mind the excerpts above, one of the students makes a comparison between the conception men held about women some years ago and how this idea has changed nowadays, while two other students expressed some comments related to what they have heard about this issue. This discussion allowed us to see that the woman's role and her image has been transforming for a better understanding of the importance of women in society, recognizing her rights and values.

Moreover, another social issue addressed in the worksheets had to do with the lack of awareness about taking care of animals. Some of their reflections on the matter were the

following:

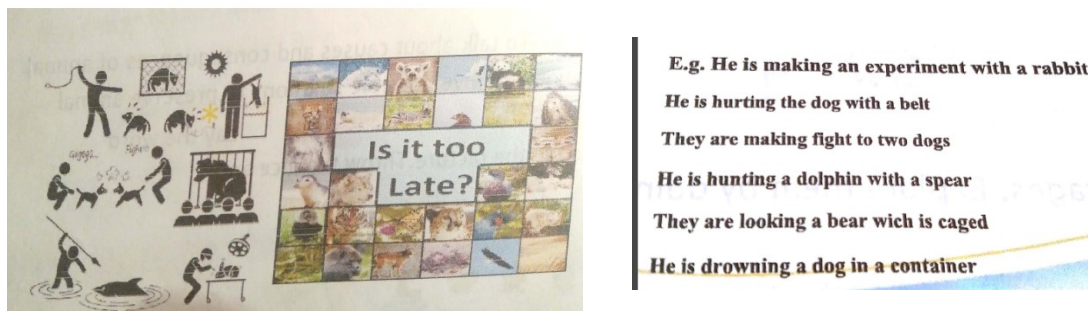
There is not enough awareness yet in society or taking care of animals  
 D.M: We should protect animals, our nature and living beings  
 -Animals mistreatment is one of the worst problems we have to face and try to look for possible solutions  
 D.A: Some people poison animals to feel them satisfied  
 -Some people are rude with animals, so they start hitting them, just because they do not like them  
 L.E: People hate animals and do not take care of species  
 -People think about how getting money taking advantages of some animals' fur

Field notes, May 15th, Ss D.M, L.E, D.A

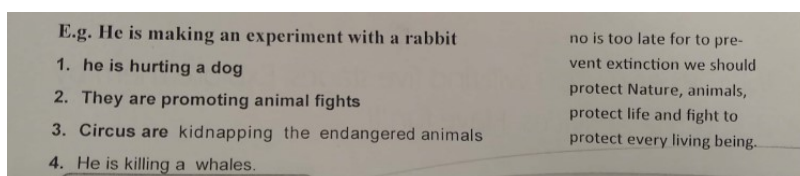
Based on these ideas, one can infer that there is a big concern about how people treat animals and how they take care of them. In this regard, and based on the student's background knowledge, it is well known that animal furs have been used to make different objects taking

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

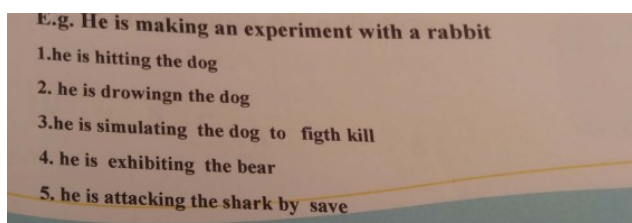
advantage of the fur trade. Also, animal mistreatment is one of the most common social issues that we currently face which is evidenced in the samples below.



Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, March 15th, Ss D.A



Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, March 15th, Ss L.E



Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, March 15th, Ss M.H

Taking into account the previous artifacts, the students highlight that people take advantage of different species, by making experiments, hunting them and placing them in cages. This in complemented with my observation taken from the field notes.

Ss found interesting ideas talking about animal mistreatment, due to the most of them have pets. Animal mistreat is one of the main causes to have endangered species

Field notes, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th,)

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

L.S “Yo tengo una mascota, un perro, se llama Mateo y no me gustaría que nadie le pegue o lo maltrate”.

Field notes, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th,)

“I have a pet, a dog, he is Mateo, but I would not like to anybody hits or mistreats him”

Field notes, May 5th, Ss L.S, translation done by the author

D.E “I have a cat, he is playful, just a little, bit I would like to nobody hits him”.

Field notes, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th,)

D.E “Yo tengo un gato, un poco travieso, pero no me gustaría que nadie le pegue c

Field notes, May 5th, Ss D.E, translation done by the author

Also, in these excerpts, students related animal extinction to animal mistreatment, taking into account that they have pets as many other students do. Based on the above, the students reflected upon social issues like drugs consumption, sexism and animal extinction by means of the worksheets. In such a way, “the materials incorporated tasks that involved the use of critical thinking skills such as critical analysis of information and the proposal of alternative solutions to social problems through the inclusion of controversial tasks and topics” (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2013, p. 3). Thus, one of the principal objectives when implementing the worksheets was for students to become aware of these social issues. Hence, the worksheets allowed students to discuss about them and assume an active role, at least in the places they live in. In addition,

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

the worksheets had images and written texts that allowed students to read the reality, reflecting upon it and looking for possible solutions, since they could understand the importance of becoming critical readers. Thus, they became aware of the fact that they can do certain changes in their local contexts which can improve their own lifestyle and ways of thinking.

***Developing worksheets to recognize and use metacognitive reading strategies to foster reading comprehension.*** This second subcategory refers to the incidence that the worksheets had on students' perceptions since to the texts chosen and the designed activities allowed students to comprehend the text.

Since materials development is a meaningful area for English didactic, it is very important to highlight that MD "seeks, through the practical exercise of developing materials, to have the participants make more inclusive didactic proposals to respond to the country's agenda that is expected to be built in the educational settings" (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2013, p. 7). That is why, I consider fundamental to include texts which allowed students to think about social issues.

Thus, the written texts were meaningful tools for students to improve their reading comprehension and become critical readers, taking into account that "education makes it possible for individuals to insert themselves in society and then empower themselves to assume their roles as critical social agents, capable of generating equity and change" (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2013, p. 7) With this in mind, the worksheets implemented throughout the study allowed students to talk about different social issues by constructing meaning through the interaction and involvement they had with the materials (Snow, 2003, p. 12). Those written texts promoted not only reflection but also to receive input as well as to monitor students' learning process. Thus,

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

the workseets became efficient tools to foster the monitoring of each student's learning process.

In this regard,

“The research line on Materials Development and Didactics proposes that students approach creative manners to promote the development of materials that help them learn and advance on their own in the language learning process. Thus, it fosters the development of materials of self-study and brings tools that help students gain confidence in their learning process” (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2013, p.8).

Considering the above, if a student monitors his or her own reading comprehension, he or she is going to be able to answer different questions and identify weaknesses as well as strengths in the reading process. In this regard, metacognition implies for “students to be aware of their learning, to evaluate their learning needs, to generate strategies to meet their needs and to implement those strategies” (Hacker, Dunlosky & Graesser, 2009 a, p. 1). The latter implies for students to work on their weaknesses and on those aspects they need to improve. This idea is supported with the excerpt shown below taken from the survey, which reflects how meaningful the use of materials was, due to the fact that students used the tools to start working with the reading strategies as well as to self-monitor their own process.

“Yo considero que las estrategias de lectura son importantes para identificar las ideas principales y secundarias del texto. Por ejemplo, yo pienso que releer cada párrafo y utilizar las glosas es una actividad dura pero es útil para tener una mejor comprensión de un texto cuando uno tiene que devolverse a este mientras uno lee y uno encuentra las ideas más importantes ara resumir el texto”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P

‘I consider reading strategies are important to identify the principal and supporting ideas, having a better comprehension from the text. For example, I think that reread each paragraph and use glosses is a challenge

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

activity but it is useful to have a better comprehension of the text when you have to go back to the text while reading and find the most important ideas to make a summary.

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P, translation done by the author

According to this comment, the student affirmed that she liked to reread the text to get more ideas and understand it by using glosses while reading; however, she considered that it was not an easy process to do but a meaningful one because she could go back to the text to identify key ideas to summarize it. By doing so, the student can have a better understanding of the reading using the worksheets designed which were the bridge to carry out this study.

While reading, with the implementation of the worksheets, students made use of the reading strategies. Some of the most common strategies they used were highlighting the principal information of each paragraph of the text, summarizing the text by making mind maps or a graphic design, rereading the text, predicting and confirming some information given and explaining it to others. The students were able to use these reading strategies due to the worksheets implemented. Therefore, “the materials assume a significant social role that becomes more relevant each day in our academic contexts” (Núñez, Téllez & Castellanos, 2013, p, 10), and based on these, as a teacher researcher, I could incorporate different tools to make the content appealing for students.

On the other hand, students wrote glosses within the text and kept on reading. Using glosses is an important reading strategy, since it entails to identify the most important ideas of a paragraph, summarizing the information. However, the student said that

L.S “Es más fácil subrayar las ideas principales en cambio de escribirlas, porque la estrategia de subrayado hace el proceso más fácil”

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss L.S

L.S: It is easier to underline the main ideas instead of writing them, because the strategy of underlining makes the reading process easier

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P, translation done by the author

D.M “Aunque es difícil utilizar las glosas cuando uno quiere, me parece que son muy útiles para recordar la información de las lecturas más fácil”.

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss D.M

D.M “Even when it is difficult to use glosses when I want to, those seem very useful to remember the information of the readings easier”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss D.M, translation done by the author

In a similar way, below there are some excerpts which show the use of glosses

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

3. Read the following letter, underline the main idea of each paragraph and circle the unknown words and write a gloss next to each paragraph

**Immigrants are important in America**  
Dear President of the United States,

I am an immigrant from Ecuador and I am a senior in high school. Immigrants need to be recognized in this country because they do important work here and right now they do not have enough voice in the government. Dear President, with all the respect that you deserve, we immigrants need to have immigration reform to remain in the United States and be able to work freely. Immigrants should not be abused. People say that immigrants are bad people or criminals but we are not. We the immigrants are also human. We are not animals, and we also have the right to be recognized by how we are working and not as criminals.

immigration  
humans  
to his  
recognized

A great example of how Latinos are discriminated against is when Donald Trump spoke during his candidacy, with his evil and childlike speech against the lower race or religions. He does not want to join the country together, he wants to destroy it. Racism in America is happening mainly by European Americans against African Americans, Latinos or Muslim immigrants. Nationality, language, customs and culture does not determine a race. In the videos below you can see the evidence.

lowest race and religion  
latinos  
muslim  
donald trump  
racism

In conclusion, the "social discrimination occurs for many reasons, whether envy, lack of knowledge or simply intolerance," but it is increasing and leading to violence. The only solution is to try to be more tolerant of others and we should all be equal to all and also try to be more supportive of others because they can not always be lucky as us.

envy  
intolerance  
solution  
tolerant

"We say live in a society where equality prevails, however through the practice of discrimination, we realize that the society in which we live is not egalitarian." Discrimination is a problem that has been increasing over the years. With new laws, we can learn to accept the cultural diversity that exists in the U.S. in order to live together in peace. We immigrants need to be recognized for our work.

discrimination  
is a  
problem  
that  
increasing

Sincerely,

A student.

Taken from <https://letters2president.org/letters/10587>

Artifact, 5<sup>st</sup> worksheet, June 5th, Ss L.E; M,P; D,A

3. Read the following letter, underline the main idea of each paragraph and circle the unknown words and write a gloss next to each paragraph

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Immigrants  
Recognized.

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Discriminated  
between  
equals

In conclusion, the "social discrimination occurs for many reasons, whether envy, lack of knowledge or simply intolerance," but it is increasing and leading to violence. The only solution is to try to be more tolerant of others and we should all be equal to all and also try to be more supportive of others because they can not always be lucky as us.

Discrimination  
is due to lack  
of education

"We say live in a society where equality prevails, however through the practice of discrimination, we realize that the society in which we live is not egalitarian." Discrimination is a problem that has been increasing over the years. With new laws, we can learn to accept the cultural diversity that exists in the U.S. in order to live together in peace. We immigrants need to be recognized for our work.

Diversity  
must be  
accepted.

Sincerely,

A student.

Taken from <https://letters2president.org/letters/10587>

Artifact, 5<sup>st</sup> worksheet, June 5th, Ss M,P



## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

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In conclusion, the "social discrimination occurs for many reasons, whether any lack of knowledge or simply intolerance," but it is increasing and leading to violence. The only solution is to try to be more tolerant of others and we should all be equal to all and also try to be more supportive of others because they can not always be lucky as us.

"We say live in a society where equality prevails, however through the practice of discrimination, we realize that the society in which we live is not egalitarian." Discrimination is a problem that has been increasing over the years. With new laws, we can learn to accept the cultural diversity that exists in the U.S. in order to live together in peace. We immigrants need to be recognized for our work.

Sincerely,  
 A student.

Taken from <https://letters2president.org/letters/10587>

*Handwritten glosses:*  
 Immigrants Recognized  
 Discriminated Between equals  
 Discrimination is due to lack of education  
 Diversity must be accepted  
 enough voice  
 Speech dis  
 together join  
 happening suicide  
 any envy diary  
 lucky  
 however, sin embay  
 Egalitarian quality

Artifact, 5<sup>st</sup> worksheet, June 5th, Ss L.E; M,P; D,A

Additionally, as seen in the excerpt above, the student underlined some key ideas in each paragraph and also wrote some glosses for each of them. For instance, one of the glosses says, "discrimination is a problem that increasing". Based on that gloss, one can infer that the student took into account the key words found in the paragraph, writing the main idea about it. Another gloss taken from the same excerpt says; "lower race and religion –latinos - muslim - Donald Trump- racism". Even though the student did not write connectors, she used key words to focus on the general idea. Furthermore, by using glosses the reader made fewer interruptions while reading. Hence, glosses can become useful mediators to assist reading comprehension by writing down key words or ideas from a text at the moment of reading.

In this regard, some students affirm:

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

M.P "For me, I like use glosses because I can remember the ideas easy"

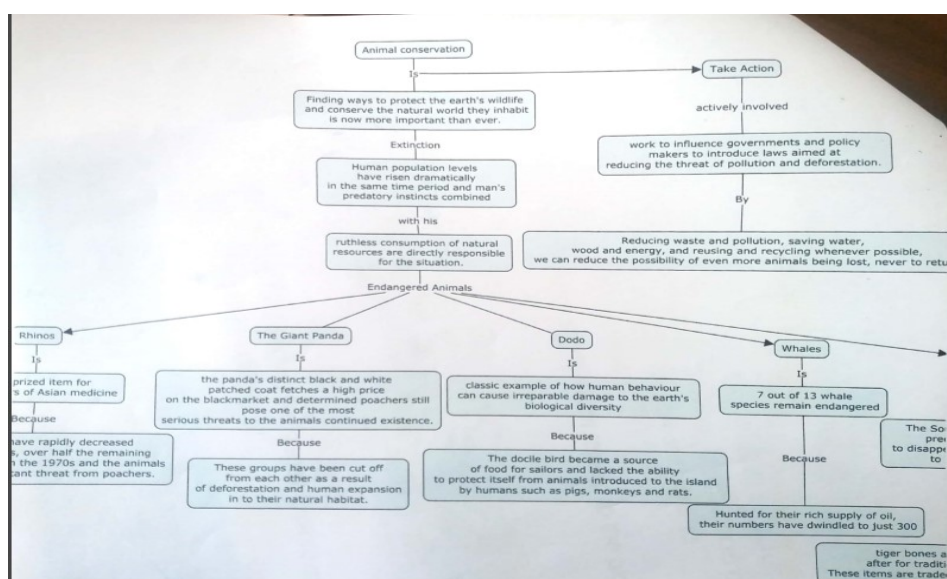
L.S "For me it difficult use glosses but I like, that strategy because I can relate the ideas paragraphs"

D.A "Is useful but I can spend more time reading, it is difficult"

Field Notes, 4<sup>th</sup> worksheet, May 22th, Ss .M.P, L.S, D.A

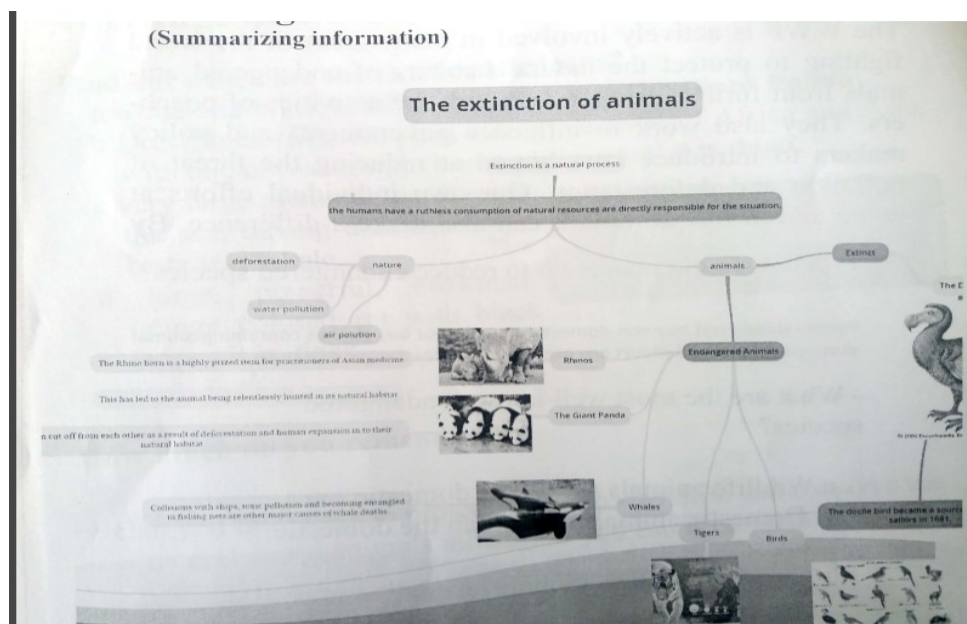
In this excerpt, two students mentioned that they like using glosses because it helps them to relate and recall ideas within paragraphs. However, one student stated that he spent more time reading when doing so. Hence, it is well known that this reading strategy requires more time but it is a worthy strategy to use; if a reader wants to go back to the text, the glosses provide the required information.

Another reading strategy used was making mind maps to summarize the information given from the text. In such a way, this strategy was a useful mediator to assist reading comprehension by giving meaning to the text. An example of this is shown below.

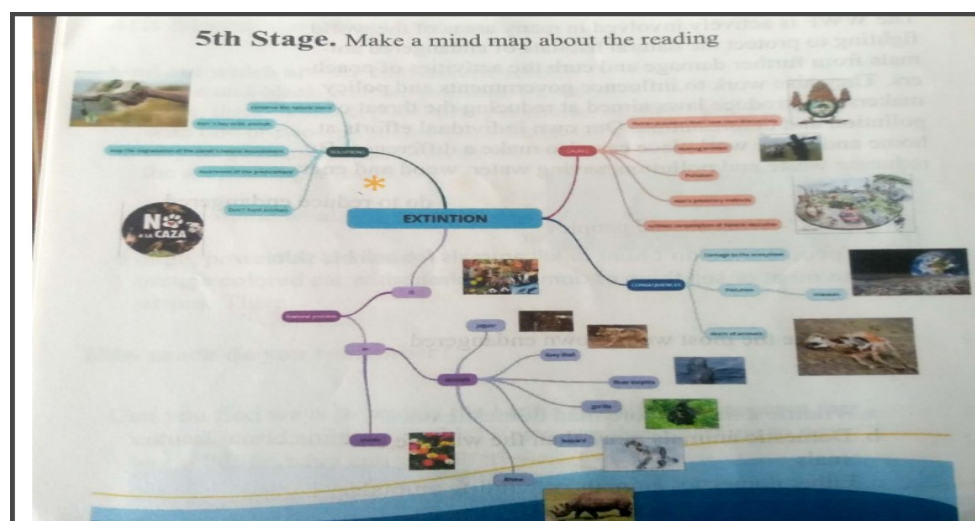


## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th, Ss M.H



Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th, Ss D.M



Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th, Ss D.A

In these excerpts, the students wrote the main ideas and key words from the text, as well as pasted some images, which were also fundamental to make a more detailed description, bearing in mind that reading a text is not only reading the words but also the images, plus ones'

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

own interpretation of the text. So, the first worksheet became an efficient resource to provide students with tools to make mind maps as seen above, taking into account that students said they liked creating mind maps. So as a teacher researcher, I considered fundamental to keep this in mind and follow the following quote: “Teachers should demonstrate that students are essential to them and that they are the reason for communicating and learning together through their attitudes, thoughts, and materials” (Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos & Ramos, 2012, p. 17)

Also, it is based on the following example according to students’ opinions.

L.S “Yo considero que una de las estrategias más fáciles fue hacer los mapas mentales o conceptuales, porque yo podía resumir la información, yo podía usar las imágenes, palabras claves y los conectores”

(

One to one interview, June 5th , Ss L.S,

L.S: I considered that one of the most useful reading strategies was making mind maps, because I can summarize information, I can use images, key words and connectors. I lik

One to one interview, June 5th , Ss L.S, translation done by the author

In the same way, the student stated that he liked making mind maps because it helped him to summarize a text using letters as well as images. With this in mind, there are some advantages for a reader while using this effective tool. It helps to organize the ideas at the moment of writing them down on paper, it allows connections with the information provided, it aids retaining

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

information, it saves time by writing the key words or ideas to summarize what the text is about as well as it permits the reader to be creative. In this regard, the following excerpt gives account of it.

Students were making mind maps using the web page “making mind maps creator”. Students seemed interested in designing them, because they were concentrated doing so. They wrote key words or general ideas from the text chose some drawings to paste them on the paper and few times they went back to the text to corroborate the subtitles included in the text

Field notes, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th

Bearing in mind the above, a mind map is a good tool to include after reading because it allows to summarize the information from a text focusing on the main ideas and also to establish associations among them. Also, the reader is able to choose and organize the ideas monitoring his or her own reading comprehension. So, as a teacher- researcher I took into account that a “teacher-developed materials that fulfill students’ needs can be seen as an innovative practice in the EFL classroom” (Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos and Ramos, 2012, p. 20).

After analyzing the advantages of using the worksheets as well as implementing the reading strategies such as using glosses, making mind maps, relating the background knowledge with the new input, proposing possible solutions while reading, I can conclude that these materials allowed students to become more active readers, to monitor their own reading process, understanding that reading goes beyond reading the letters, and focusing much more on their background knowledge. This implies an interactive process that not only is related to answering some comprehension questions, but also is focused on the reader’s personal assessment to build meaning based on the reading process. Therefore, through the design of the activities found in the worksheets, the students got engaged, bearing in mind that it is essential “to guide students

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

towards the importance of recognizing their own learning process”( Núñez, Téllez, Castellanos and Ramos, 2012, p. 23).

**Reading the world by making use of one’s experiences.** This second category relates to students’ background knowledge and how the new input allowed the students to contrast and compare the writer’s point of view with the reader’s view. Bearing in mind that through the creation of materials, one the most important objectives was take into account students’ background knowledge to encourage them to talk about different social issues.

Similarly, Freire and Macedo (1987) state that “reading does not consist merely of decoding the written word or language; rather, it is preceded by and intertwined with knowledge of the world” (p. 29).

Considering that reading is an interactive process, where both reader and writer engage in a constant dialogue, it is fundamental to give sense and construct meaning from a text while reading. From this perspective these authors argue that “reading is a political act, an act of knowledge and therefore a creative act” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 34). Therefore, background knowledge and new input are related to people’s experiences which help build the readers’ own criterion about a specific topic. Likewise, Goodman and Wilde (1996) affirm that “the meaning is in the writer and the reader” (p. 85). Both of these aspects are important to give sense to a text.

Reading a text is a complex and a valuable process, in which the reader approaches the text, taking an active role while doing so. In this sense, it is important to reflect upon the reading process and how from our childhood we start reading images and our own reality which surrounds us. This assertion has two implications: the first one is related to the fact that from very early age, everyone reads the world, since human being starts reading their own context, experiencing different feelings by knowing places, people, and the like. And the second one is

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

focused on how readers understand and propose possible solutions in regard to a controversial topic.

In such a way, reading the world goes beyond reading a text which is not only related to the comprehension of the text but also on how we interpret and analyze what it says. Due to this, “the act of learning to read and write has to start from a very comprehensive understanding of the act of reading the world, something which human beings do before reading the words” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. xiii). From this perspective, reading is a complex and a meaningful process which entails the connection between previous knowledge and the new input received to build meaning from a text.

Considering the above, this category has two subcategories which will be explained below. The first one is related to the connections that people make with a reading based on situations they have lived and the second one is concerned with students’ stance towards the different issues discussed in class.

***Relating people’s experiences with the content of the texts.*** Relating what students have experienced with the information given in the texts became a worthy process which allowed learners to give sense to them, not only by listening to others. But also by sharing their own experiences. This empowering situation allowed students to read the reality by reading the world.

In this regard, students contrasted previous knowledge with the new one while reading. That is why, it is important to know that “We acquire background knowledge through the interaction of two factors: (1) our ability to process and store information and (2) the number and frequency of our academically oriented experiences” (Marzano, 2004, p. 4). To experience life in different situations is a very important way of storing information while understanding, comprehending and giving sense to it.



## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

Throughout the implementation of the worksheets, I noticed some important aspects that helped my students at the moment of predicting what the reading was about, like for example, reading the pictures, titles, subtitles and answering the questions posed about the text. They were able to do so by relying mainly on their prior knowledge as shown below



2. Talk to your partner if you had experienced a robbery



(Artifact, 4<sup>th</sup> worksheet, May 22<sup>nd</sup>)

L.S: "I remember when I was in the Bosa Transmilenio station, I was talking in my cell phone and a man caught it. I feel sad because this cellphone is expensive"

D.A: "Me too, I was walking in Chapinero neighborhood and a man stole my wallet. I feel frustrated"

Artifact, 4<sup>th</sup> worksheet, May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Ss L.S; D.A

In this excerpt, students were sharing their ideas about some experiences they have had related to delinquency. Since this social issue is a common problem in our country, many students have experienced something related to it. Thus, background knowledge was fundamental to understand this social issue as shown below.



## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

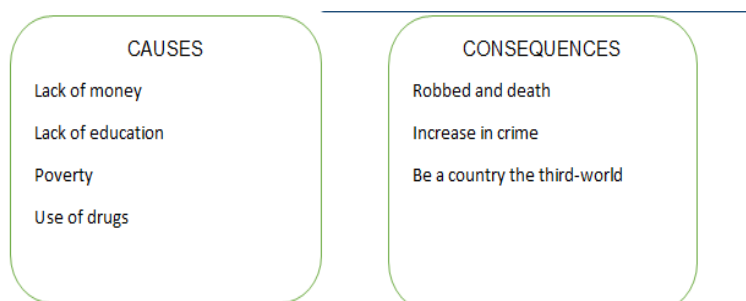
L. S "I have robbed in the street, La Candelaria" I was walking in the night and a man robbed my cellphone"  
 D. A "My wallet have been robbed in transmilenio but I knew when I arrived home"  
 L. E "I was in a bus, a woman robbed my cellphone, because I was chatting"

Field Notes, May 22nd, Ss L.S, D.A, L.E

Students showed interest in talking about what they have experienced. They seemed disappointed about what is going on in our country, because they recognized neither the police nor any governmental area, have done something to eradicate or at least look for possible solutions to reduce this big social issue.

Field Notes, 4<sup>th</sup> worksheet, May 22nd

These samples show how some students have lived this situation while others have seen some robberies on the news or have heard from people they share time with. To further analyze this issue, I designed an activity so that students could reflect on its causes and consequences and these were some of the ideas one student came up with.



Artifact, 4<sup>th</sup> worksheet, June 28th, Ss M.H

In this excerpt, the student used her background knowledge to talk about what she knew about this topic, making a reading of the world, which is related to what is seen in society.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

It has been very useful to read the texts, using my background knowledge and relate it with the new information. I like predicting what will happen in the reading and I can compare what I thought at the very beginning with the end of the process, at the moment of answering reading comprehension questions.

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss L.E translation done by the author

D.M “I liked to see pictures related to the information I know and talk about my experiences, because for me it is easier to make comparisons of an English text with my previous experiences. So, I can learn easily”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss D.M. translation done by the author

M.P “When I see images related with what I know, I feel interested in talking about them, because I can say something about it and connect this when I read”

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P. translation done by the author)

Based on the above, activating students’ background knowledge was a fundamental aspect for learners to be able to read the world. Hence, it is significant to highlight that prior knowledge helped the readers to assume a position towards the content of a text since

Prior knowledge affects construction of meaning for everyone-the emergent reader as well as the competent reader. Educators recognize that for readers to construct meaning, they must be able to make connections with what they already know, with their own feelings, and with the world at large (Cooper, Robinson, Slansky, Kiger, Oczkus, 2018, p. 95).

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In this sense, every single time we face or read a text, we assume a specific stance towards it since our prior knowledge is individual as well as our experiences. This allows a reader to construct meaning by interacting with it.

For example, in regard to animal extinction which is a controversial topic, the students were shown some pictures and based on their prior know used verbs such as hurting, making fight, hunting and drowning to explain what they interpreted about the images. This is shown below.

Students talked about their previous knowledge in an easy way due to they knew about the information required. Also, animal extinction was an interesting topic to talk about, since most of them have pets. So, they could establish connections how unfair those wild animals have been killed and how domestic ones have been hurt as well. So, students could reflect upon the bad conditions animals have faced during their life period

Field notes, May15th, translation done by the author

This sample evidences animal mistreatment both of domestic and wild ones since animals' rights have not been respected.

Besides, below there are other examples which evidence so.

Animals are as important as human beings, and they have rights which must be accomplished by everyone. However, some people do not take care of animals, because they do not think about how bad animals feel in case of being hurt by others. So, I get really mad when I see that someone is abusing an animal or hurting it

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P translation done by the author

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M.P "I do have pets, two dogs and a cat, and I get really angry when someone tries to push them or mistreat them, because they are human beings and they need to be respected as well"

L.E "I do not have pets, but If I would have a pet, I would not like that someone mistreats it, it is just to think how they feel like"

One to one interview, June 5th, Ss M.P; L.E translation done by the author

With this in mind, this subcategory recognizes the value that students' experiences have for understanding how they read their own realities as well as the reality of the world. By doing so, it is interesting to find out how students as readers comprehend and interpret some social issues. Bearing this in mind, it is significant to take into account students' experiences and to give them the opportunity to share them with others in the EFL classroom. Also, it is important to know about students' previous knowledge to be able to relate it with the new input provided in the texts.

***Students' voices: A way to state their own position.*** Learners proposed different alternatives to solve a problem, by looking for possible solutions when summarizing the text, using prior knowledge, identifying main and supporting ideas, as well as contrasting and comparing the social issues addressed in class to consolidate their own standpoint. So, this perspective is a great opportunity to recognize that "the synergy between student learning and growth and teacher direction and knowledge grows exponentially when student voice is real, true and authentic" (Lubelfeld, Polyak, Caposey, 2018, p 8). In such a way, it is important to encourage students to construct meaning by giving their own point of view to gain knowledge and become an active and a critical individual. From this perspective, the example below gives account of it.

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Finally, T asked how can we prevent discrimination  
 In regards to it, some students said that  
 M.H: People should be tolerant  
 L.E: People should not discriminate nor insulting other people  
 D.M: People should include everyone for everything, putting prejudices aside

Field notes, 5<sup>th</sup> worksheet, June 15th, Ss M.H, L.E, D.M, translation done by the author

Considering the above, the students proposed some solutions to overcome one of the social issues discussed in class: racism. In their reflection, they became more aware of the fact that it is crucial to put oneself in the shoes of the other to overcome discrimination. That is why, through tolerance, respect and love, people can understand that we all are the equal.

...ing ... and ... , ...ing ...

**- What should people do to reduce endangered species?**

- If you like the protection of natural habitats, or the prevention of trafficking in wildlife, you can find an organization dedicated to these efforts. It is recommended to become a member of that entity. Learn and actively support the organization that has been chosen.
- When you visit the zoos and local nature reserves, it is advisable to pay the price of the entry. Donations help keep these vital conservation areas.

Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th, Ss D.A

• What should people do to reduce endangered species?

People should not buy non-domestic animals, nor buy clothes containing animal skins, people should report any event that creates danger to nature.

Artifact, 1<sup>st</sup> worksheet, May 15th, Ss L.E

Likewise, in the excerpts shown above the students reflected upon another problem faced in society related with endangered species. In the discussions held in class the learners proposed different solutions to overcome this issue like taking care of domestic and wild animals as well

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as protecting nature; thus, becoming more critical readers of the reality that surrounds them and having a voice about it.

Moreover, taking into account that nowadays drugs consumption has been a challenging situation to face, the student proposed the following ideas to eradicate drugs consumption.

Artifact 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss D.A

TO ERRADICTE DRUGS CONSUMPTION

1. Prohibit the cultivation of marijuana
2. Prohibit the production of drugs
3. carry out productive activities in the free time as exercise
4. promote healthy living habits

Artifact 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss M.P)

TO ERRADICTE DRUGS CONSUMPTION

To O implement new s-laws

put an end to ilegal groups

To ---provide education to low-income people

Artifact 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss L.E

TO ERRADICTE DRUGS CONSUMPTION

Help your friends make good decisions and avoid drugs

Create new anti-drug policies

Promote home education

Educating children at schools about drugs

(Artifact 3<sup>rd</sup> worksheet, May 8th, Ss D.H)

With this in mind, the students emphasized on important aspects such as: create anti-drugs policies, educate people to become aware of this social issue, prohibit the selling of drugs to learn to say no when someone offers you to consume drugs, among other proposals. In such a way, those suggestions are fundamental to prevent becoming a drugs consumer. Besides, below there is another excerpt related to the importance of constructing meaning by taking into account students' voices

I think that it is essential to say no when someone offers you drugs to consume, in the very beginning you can feel excited but later it became a problem and an addiction

Field notes, March 8th, Ss D.A

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With these reflections, it is evident that to become a critical reader is the best way to make decisions in life. Likewise, fostering home and school education is crucial; two places where students learn to read the world by experiencing it. In that way, “Skill in critical reading builds students’ confidence, enriches their understanding about the world and enables their successful educational progress” (DiYanny & Borst, 2017, p. 3) That is why to become a critical reader is the best way to get engaged with the text and to have a meaningful and a valuable experience not only with the text, but also with the reality that surround us. In this regard, it is fundamental to keep in mind the following excerpt.

I think that many of us have consumed drugs  
any time, because as youngers we enjoy trying them,  
but the first important thing is to become aware  
of saying no to consume drugs under any circumstance.  
From that perspective, each person should keep a critical  
reader of the different situations that happened in the world.

(Field notes, March 8th, Ss M.H)

In this last excerpt, the student stated that he has tried drugs; however, he is aware of the importance of making people aware of it. In such a way, it is crucial to encourage students to think about how they behave and read the reality of the world that surrounds them so that they can assume a critical position in regards to it. With this in mind, it is crucial to take into account that “critical reading requires both listening and taking back to texts, engaging them through reflection and dialogue” (DiYanny & Borst, 2017, p. 3).

In sum, since students reflected upon the texts by using metacognitive reading strategies, they stated how important it was to become a critical reader by using these strategies which allowed them to monitor their own reading process and also to set their own criteria, looking for possible solutions to the problems addressed. While doing this process, students considered

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themselves as active readers, not only by reading the text but also by stating their points of view, building their own criteria and letting others know about it. By doing so, they were taking an active role as readers when analyzing a text and assuming a critical position by scrutinizing a text and relating it with their background knowledge. This helped them to set their own criteria, giving sense to their reading process which went beyond accomplishing the reading tasks.



## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusions and Pedagogical Implications**

In this last chapter I present the conclusions and pedagogical implications of my study as well as the limitations I faced while carrying it out. Moreover, I mention some questions that can be addressed for further research.

#### **Conclusions**

Materials development is a meaningful area to explore, since through the creation of the worksheets, as a teacher researcher, I could respond to my students' needs and enhance their learning process. In such a way, innovation seems to be very important to highlight that "educational innovations are planned to bring about improvement in classroom practice with the ultimate aim of enhancing student achievement" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998. p.28). In this way, innovative materials can become appealing for students and can capture their attention.

As a teacher researcher I considered fundamental to reflect upon my pedagogical practice since "old habits die hard and teacher attitudes are not easily amenable to change" (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p.37). In such a way, it is important to reflect upon how we teach and what we teach, taking into account that one of the main objectives of a teacher is to look for possible solutions to students' needs and bring innovation into the classroom.

Bearing in mind that innovation was one of the pillars of this current study and based on my students' perceptions, they pointed out that the use of the worksheets was a meaningful tool that enhanced their learning since the different activities were appealing and familiar to them. In such a way, students were engaged with the activities since one of the main goals of a teacher

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researcher is “to make the innovation more compatible to the needs of the teachers and to the realities of the classroom context” (Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1998, p. 39).

While students recognized the importance of using metacognitive reading strategies and since they self-monitored their learning process, they became aware of how they read while reflecting upon social issues. In such a way, by using the worksheets the students were able to put into practice these strategies thus improving their reading comprehension. For instance, students considered the metacognitive reading strategies as a useful tool to apply in their reading since they could focus on the main ideas more easily while reading the text. In addition, when students used glosses, they could create a deeper understanding of the texts. However, in one of the texts, some students admitted that it was challenging for them to use glosses, especially when the texts were long since it took them more time to do the tasks.

In a similar way, students found predicting as a significant reading strategy, taking into account that they had the opportunity to approach the text before reading it, which allowed them to employ their prior knowledge, bearing in mind clues such as pictures, titles and images, among other aspects. In the same way, another reading strategy they employed was using their background knowledge. This was an important strategy which motivated students to get closer to the text. In a similar way, activating their background knowledge was fundamental to introduce the topic since students were able to relate their own experiences with the new input given in the text by making comparisons and establishing relations to enrich and gain knowledge.

Also, students liked to summarize the information given from the text by making mind maps. They stated that it was a very useful and didactic tool to identify the most important information, making connections and summarizing the information shown in the text which

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made it more comprehensible. It also allowed them to keep track of their reading process, by prioritizing the most relevant information by re-writing it using key-words or sentences.

Besides, students were proposing some possible solutions to overcome the social issues mentioned in the worksheets. It was not easy for them to think about those alternatives, since most of them have lived or faced these problems which continue to affect society. However, they came up with some possible suggestions based on self-questionning and reflection. In that order of ideas, students activated their learning by putting it in context and they were engaged in looking for possible solutions to solve the problems.

While implementing the worksheets, students found interesting to read a text and use the reading strategies. They stated that they could remember the information easier by doing so. In such a way, students mentioned that before this implementation, when they read texts in English, they just read them once and they focused their attention on developing the reading tasks because that was what they were asked to do. Thus, they recognized that they were not aware of how they were monitoring their reading comprehension or how they were using the reading strategies. Bearing this in mind, the students took advantage of using those reading strategies and this was a rewarding experience for them since these allowed them to self-monitor their reading process and also to construct reading awareness. The latter played a worthy role since developing reading awareness allowed students to monitor their own learning process by approaching reading in a more critical way, thus enhancing their reading skills through self-assessment.

Considering that this group of students did not like reading in English very much because they found it difficult, throughout this study, they became familiarized with some reading strategies and these helped them to improve their reading comprehension by self-monitoring their learning process.

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In sum, reading a text with a critical perspective is an important process to achieve because a reader has the possibility to relate his or her background knowledge with the new information found in a text, considering that a critical reader can analyse and give an opinion or suggestion about a topic. In this order of ideas, the more a reader gets involved with a reading, the better he/she will understand the topic. In such a way, a reader who dares to pose questions about a text and who confronts the stance presented by the author, becomes a critical reader who can challenge what the writer has to say.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

Since reading is an essential skill to develop, as a teacher researcher, I found out how important it was for my students to use the metacognitive reading strategies to enhance reading comprehension. This allowed them to self-monitor their process and become more autonomous in their reading process. That is why it is important to highlight that throughout the implementation phase of this research, students used different reading strategies which were key to comprehend and interpret texts. Therefore, the students constructed meaning from the text by putting the reading strategies into practice.

As a teacher researcher, carrying out this research has been a rewarding experience, bearing in mind that one of the objectives was to enable students to become more skillful readers by using reading strategies. In such a way, reading is an essential skill to foster, due to the fact that proficient readers are capable of interpreting a text or reality. Thus, to promote reading as an interactive process is fundamental within the EFL classroom because it allows students to build meaning and it also encourages them to keep updated about what is happening in the world. In education, it is necessary to create autonomous and independent learners who interpret and propose solutions while reading not only the written texts but also the reality of the world. By

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providing students with reading strategies that fit each learning process, taking into account their individual needs, this can be fostered.

The aforementioned information highlights that students need to empower themselves by fostering their reading comprehension process, by monitoring their own reading process and also by developing reading awareness. This interactive process enables decision making and allows students to settle an opinion based on their own criteria. With this in mind, metacognitive reading strategies bring opportunities for learners to monitor their own progress, by means of self-motivation and commitment.

### **Limitations**

One of the main limitations I faced while doing this action research study was not having enough time to implement the activities found in the worksheets since I only had one session per week with this group of students. In such a way, I found very challenging to develop all of the worksheets on time following the programmed schedule.

### **Further Research**

It is of fundamental importance to continue inquiring about the role that teacher made materials have when teaching English as a foreign language as well as to develop the other language skills at the university level. In this sense, it would be relevant to carry out other research studies framed within Critical Pedagogy that would help students identify the most appropriate speaking strategies while at the same time developing a critical position towards key problems affecting society. Thus, a possible research question to inquire about could be: How do the design and implementation of teacher-made materials focused on speaking strategies, enhance university students' critical stance towards issues affecting our society today?

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Students' Consent Form

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

***Description of the research and your participation:***

The purpose of this research is to study the incidence of metacognitive reading strategies in the reading comprehension process. This consent allows you to participate in the current research study. Your intervention will involve completing some reading worksheets conducted by Angela Garzón. Once, you have given the worksheets, I will analyze them in order to find out what metacognitive strategies work better for the participants. In such a way, students will be able to identify and use those strategies, applying them not only in English but also in other subjects.

If you are interested in getting involved into this study, please fill out the following information.

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

University: \_\_\_\_\_

Career: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe in brief what you expect about enrolling this study:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Name:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix B****Institution's Consent Form**

February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017

Language Center Universidad Manuela Beltrán

***Description of the research:***

The purpose of this research is to study the incidence of metacognitive reading strategies in the reading comprehension process. This consent allows students to participate in the current research study. Their intervention will involve completing some reading worksheets conducted by Angela Garzón. Once, they have given the worksheets, I will analyze them in order to find out what metacognitive strategies work better for the participants. In such a way, students will be able to identify and use those strategies, applying them not only in English but also in other subjects.

Similarly, this study gains knowledge in reading comprehension and it is a useful material to apply for students who are taking level Intermediate in the reading plan sessions.

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Professor

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Principal Language Center

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

**Appendix C****One To One Interview**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. ¿Cuáles fueron las mejores estrategias de lectura que fortalecen tu proceso de comprensión de lectura? What are the best reading strategies that foster your reading comprehension process?

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2. ¿Cuáles son los problemas sociales más importantes que aun existen pero que han mejorado? Puedes pensar en alguna solución? What are the biggest social issues that still exist but have changed for better? Could you think about any solution?

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3. ¿Cuál es la parte más interesante de la guía? What is the most interesting part of each worksheet?

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4. ¿Cuál fue la estrategia de lectura más difícil? What was the most difficult reading strategy?

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## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

### One to One Interview – Transcription

#### 1. What are the best reading strategies that foster your reading process?

M.P: “I think social issues are meaningful to talk about them, due to they allow us to reflect upon our lifestyle and also how we can improve or change some things that are well done. Also, I found interesting to use different readings to gain more knowledge and interpret the information provided from the texts and compare or contrast it with our point of view” (Final Survey, September 16, Ss A.P, translation done by the author).

L.E: “In my opinion, reflect upon social issues is good, because sometimes we put apart the problems and also we read the texts just because we have to. So, by using reading strategies I can understand more”

D.A “I consider reading strategies are important to identify the principal and supporting ideas, having a better comprehension from the text. For example, I think that reread each paragraph and use glosses is a challenge activity but it is useful to have a better comprehension of the text when you have to go back to the text while reading and finding the most important ideas to make a summary”

M.H “I considered that one of the most interesting reading strategies was making mind maps, because I can summarize information, I can use images, key words and connectors”

L.S: It is easier to underline the main ideas instead of writing them, because the strategy of underlining makes the reading process easier

#### 2. What are the biggest social issues that still exist but have changed for better?. Could you think in any solution?

L.E: I think that sexism was an useful topic to discuss about. However, men in general think that nowadays Colombian men are not as sexist as they used to be

M.P: Animals are as important as human beings, and they have rights which must be accomplished by everyone. However, some people do not take care of animals, because they do not think about how bad animals feel in case of being hurt by others. So, I get really mad when I see that someone is abusing an animal or hurting it

Animal extinction has been an important problematic but people continue thinking upon themselves. So, they hit, hunt and harm domestic animals, People are rude. The only solution I see it is that some foundations provide animals shelters and food. And one solution will be to adopt animals who live in the street and give them a shelter. So, they can live decently.

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

## Appendix D

## Field notes

**Research Question:** How do the design and implementation of material focused on metacognitive strategies enhance reading comprehension among university students in an EFL classroom?

**Date:** May 15th **Time:** 12:00-2:00 pm **Place of observation:** Lab 404

Description of the activities and details what happens in it	Reflection
<p>The session started asking students Are we taking care of our animal species.</p> <p>Students Say: No, teacher. Teacher asked why not?</p> <p>The student M.P said replied: “Because people kill animals, persons mistreat them, people do not care about them”.</p> <p>There is not enough awareness yet in society or taking care of animals</p> <p>D.M: We should protect animals, our nature and living beings</p> <p>-Animals mistreatment is one of the worst problems we have to face and try to look for possible solutions</p> <p>D.A: Some people poison animals to feel them satisfied</p> <p>-Some people are rude with animals, so they start hitting them, just because they do not like them</p> <p>L.E: People hate animals and do not take care of species</p>	<p>Some students have some pets and they know that even when people have domestic animals they do not take care of them. So, they are aware of wild species are in danger even more than domestic ones because the human being is taking advantage of those species in many ways.</p> <p>Students say, that some people use their fur to use it to sell clothing, shoes or different objects.</p> <p>Students mentions some words and they were looking for some of them in the virtual dictionaries since we were at the computer lab.</p> <p>They were having fun as they knew it was a competition, so they tried to make the exercises as fast as they could to get more points</p> <p>According to the first picture, they wrote some sentences using present progressive, they were looking up some</p>

## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

<p>-People think about how getting money taking advantages of some animals' fur</p> <p>Each group of students received a dice from the teacher related to animals description, they must mention the name of each drawing and make a sentence including the word chosen and wrote it on a piece of paper</p> <p>Later, students were looking some images and writing some sentences related to two pictures.</p> <p>Teacher asked the question related to the second picture It is too late to preserve animal wildlife?</p>	<p>words and writing them. I could see when they were doing that activity the expressed some comments like teacher I feel angry about mistreating animals. They started talking about zoos and circus because they though in those places people abuse of animals. According to the question Is it too late? Students inferred the question was related to extinction, so they said yes it is, because nobody..... thinksneither people nor animals and also because of experiments animals are in danger every day.</p> <p>Students were having fun and there was one group who found out all the words. It was an entertaining activity for them</p> <p>Students like the activity to listen to audio while reading, because they thought it was an interesting activity to remember some words pronunciation. Students talked about their previous knowledge in an easy way due to they knew about the information required. Also, animal extinction was an interesting topic to talk about, since most of them have pets. So, they could establish connections how unfair those wild animals have been killed and how domestic ones have been hurt as well. So, students could reflect upon the bad conditions animals have faced during their life period</p>
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## FOSTERING READING COMPREHENSION IN AN EFL CLASS

<p>Students play scramble using some words related to environmental issues.</p> <p>In the second stage, students were predicting the words related to the topic by finding out what the anagrams were. Teacher was giving students some letters, so they were putting in order and making the words.</p> <p>After that, as we were at the computer lab, students read the text while listening to it. They were looking up some words' meaning</p> <p>In the third stage, students were answering some questions about the text</p> <p>After that, they created a mind map to summarize the information of the texts</p> <p>Students were making mind maps using the web page "making mind maps creator". Students seemed interested in designing them, because they were concentrated doing so. They wrote key words or general ideas from the text chose some drawings to paste them on the paper and few times they went back to the text to corroborate the subtitles included in the text</p>	<p>They wrote some interesting ideas in the mind map, classifying wildlife animals and writing the key words about it. Also, they mentioned some causes, consequences and possible solutions, such as do not hunt animals, do not hunt animals, among others.</p> <p>Students were making mind maps using the web page "making mind maps creator" Students seemed interested in designing them, because they were concentrated doing so. They wrote key words or general ideas from the text chose some drawings to paste them on the paper and few times they went back to the text to corroborate the subtitles included in the text</p> <p>Making maps is a good strategy to use to summarize information. That's why, it is useful to use it, not only because you can synthesize information but also, because you can relate different information from the same text, putting the information in order</p>
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